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Dissertation im Fach Soziologie

# **Girls' Agency and Decision-making around Teenage Motherhood – A qualitative study in Nicaragua**

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## **Zusammenfassung**

Nicaragua hat eine der höchsten Teenager-Geburtenraten in Lateinamerika. Das Ziel dieser Studie ist es, die subtilen Konzepte, Wahrnehmungen, Überzeugungen und Einflussfaktoren zu verstehen, die zu unterschiedlichen Fertilitätsentscheidungen junger Frauen führen können. Die Ergebnisse basieren auf qualitativen Daten, die im städtischen Nicaragua erhoben wurden. Die Studie zeigt, dass zwei strukturelle Beschränkungen die Wahlmöglichkeiten von Frauen und ihre Fähigkeit beeinflussen, aktiv an der Definition ihrer Lebenswege teilzunehmen: Armut und traditionelle Geschlechternormen. In einer armen Umgebung aufzuwachsen, bedeutet nicht nur finanzielle Benachteiligung, sondern auch mangelnde Bildungsqualität, Mangel an effektivem und zeitnahe Zugang zu Gesundheitsdiensten, Gewalt in den Wohnvierteln, Mangel an Chancen auf dem Arbeitsmarkt, Mangel an positiven Vorbildern. Darüber hinaus beeinflussen traditionelle Geschlechternormen das sexuelle Verhalten junger Frauen, ihre Interaktionen mit ihren Familien und Partnern und die Art und Weise, wie sie sich ihr Leben vorstellen. Diese Faktoren haben nicht nur Auswirkungen auf den Entscheidungsprozess, sondern auch auf die Konsequenzen dieser Entscheidungen für die jungen Frauen und ihre Kinder.

## **Abstract**

Nicaragua has one of the highest adolescent fertility rates in the region. The objective of this study is to understand the subtle concepts, perceptions, beliefs, and influencing factors that may lead to different fertility outcomes among young women. The results are based on qualitative data collected in urban Nicaragua. The study shows that two structural constraints affect women's choices and their capacity to actively participate in defining their life paths: poverty and traditional gender norms. Growing up in a poor environment not only means monetary deprivation, but also exposure to a lack of quality education, a lack of effective and timely access to health services, violence in neighborhoods, an absence of opportunities in the labor market, and a lack of positive role models. In addition, traditional gender norms affect young women's sexual behavior, their interactions with their families and partners, and the way they envision their lives. Those factors have implications not only for the process of decision-making, but also for the outcomes of those decisions for the young women and their children.

Schlagwörter:

Teenagerschwangerschaft, Gender, Aspiration, Jugend, Identitätsentwicklung, Bildung, Nicaragua

Keywords:

Teenage pregnancy, gender, aspirations, youth, identity development, education, Nicaragua

## Dedication

I would like to acknowledge those who played an important role in the writing of this dissertation, especially my father, mother and grandmother who supported me with love and kindness always. I have received strong encouragement from my advisor, Prof. Dr. Hans Bertram, and I am very grateful for his inspiration, patience and continuous support. I would also like to thank the World Bank for the permission to use unpublished qualitative data and especially Louise Cord for motivating me, inspiring me and making me believe I could do this and Oscar Calvo-Gonzalez for his constant support and wise guidance. In addition, I would like to thank the excellent team of interviewers that helped collect the qualitative data: Martha Patricia Jaen, Nadine Lacayo, Nelly Miranda and Victor Potosme. This work was substantively enriched by the key informants and their openness and willingness to share their knowledge and insights. Most importantly though, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the young women and men for trusting me and for sharing their personal experiences and life stories. Finally, I am deeply grateful to Florian for his patience and for being my best cheerleader.

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## List of abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEDLAS	Center for Distributional, Labor and Social Studies (University of La Plata)
CGD	Center for Global Development
CEPAL	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and The Caribbean
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
ENDESA	Encuesta Nicaragüense de demografía y salud
FSLN	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEM	Global Education Monitoring Report
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Foundation
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LCN	Latin America
MC/NP	Middle-class without pregnancy experience in adolescence
MC/P	Middle-class with pregnancy experience in adolescence
MDG	Millenium Development Goal

MRS	Movimiento de Renovación Sandinista
NIC	Nicaragua
NYT	New York Times
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
P/NP	Poor without pregnancy experience in adolescence
P/P	Poor with pregnancy experience in adolescence
RAAN	Atlantic Autonomous Region
RAAS	South Atlantic Autonomous Region
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEDLAC	Socio-Economic Database for Latin America and Caribbean
SERCE	Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study
STD	Sexually transmitted disease
TERCE	Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WBL	Women, Business and the Law
WDI	World Development Indicator
WDR	World Development Report
WHO	World Health Organization

# 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The situation of the world's young people today is not only fundamentally important for the future of these young people. Their situation also presents an important opportunity for poverty reduction (World Bank, 2007, p. 2). Young people—and specifically, young women—are at the core of this research project. Investing in girls is of instrumental value for societies, but it is also of value in and of itself. Securing the transitions that girls make towards adulthood (out of school, into the labor market, forming a family, etc.) is a central concern for their own sake, for the sake of their children, and for societies more broadly. Evidence reveals that the consequences of poor choices in these transitions may have long-lasting effects on their future well-being. The focus of this study lies in understanding the decision-making processes of girls who become pregnant during their adolescence and the factors that may influence their decisions to have a child or not.<sup>2</sup> Previous research on teenage pregnancy and motherhood in several disciplines (sociology, demography, economics, and anthropology) has mainly highlighted risk factors on macro and micro levels and consequences on health, education, and economic outcomes for mother and child. This work instead aims at deepening the understanding of girls' decision-making processes, which may influence those decisions and how they are being made. This thesis is based on a case study conducted in Nicaragua.

## 1.1 Why care about teenage pregnancy and motherhood?

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides signatory governments with the fundamental elements for the protection of girls and boys up to the time they reach adulthood.<sup>3</sup> From a rights perspective, it is important to note that essential principles of the CRC may be threatened if adolescents bear children (including the rights to education, to social security, and to live free from physical and mental violence and sexual exploitation). Protecting these rights is crucial, and more specifically, it is of instrumental value for development and poverty reduction. Article 1 of the CRC establishes that "...a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." Mothers who have children during adolescence will have to care for a dependent infant while they themselves have needs and interests of their own and similar to other children their age (such as

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<sup>1</sup> I gratefully acknowledge the permission of the World Bank to use unpublished qualitative data collected in Nicaragua as part of the Bank's operational work on the issue of teenage pregnancy. The analysis of this data as presented in this thesis is not a product of the World Bank, its Board of Executive Directors, or the governments they represent. The information as presented in this work does not imply any judgement on the part of the World Bank.

<sup>2</sup> It has to be emphasized that while many studies refer to the topic analyzed in this research as 'teenage pregnancy', it is actually teenage motherhood that will be at the center of this research and analysis. Given (unequal) access to abortion or the day-after-pill, many teenage pregnancies are not visible to researchers – including for myself when conducting this research in Nicaragua.

<sup>3</sup> Nicaragua signed this Convention on February 6, 1990, and ratified it on October 5, 1990. <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/child-rights/nicaragua.php>

pursuing an education, for instance). Where the rights of the child are respected and enforced, children and adolescents grow up with the possibility to develop their potentials and to become empowered citizens in their societies.

The principles and provisions of the CRC have been emphasized and reinforced specifically under the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Both, the CRC and the ICPD refer specifically to eliminating child marriage and child pregnancy. The latter one is more explicit, calling for action “to encourage children, adolescents and youth, particularly young women, to continue their education in order to equip them for a better life, to increase their human potential, to help prevent early marriages and high-risk child-bearing and to reduce the associated mortality and morbidity” (paragraph 6.7). On marriage, it calls on signatory governments to enforce: “...laws to ensure that marriage is entered into only with the free and full consent of the intended spouses...(and) laws concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age at marriage.” (paragraph 4.21) (UNFPA, 1994). Specifically on reproductive health, the Programme of Action outlines the following objective: “...protect and promote the right of adolescents to reproductive health education, information and care and greatly reduce the number of adolescent pregnancies” (paragraph 7.46).

Beyond a rights agenda, teenage pregnancy has been identified as an issue instrumental to development as evidenced in a growing body of literature, including such produced by WHO, UNFPA, and the World Bank. Research on the topic has shown the many different consequences the phenomenon has on the mother and the child, suggesting that teenage pregnancy compromises women’s educational, social, and economic prospects (see UNFPA, 2013, for an overview). With regard to education, research shows that teenage mothers face lower educational outcomes throughout their lifetime. A background paper for Azevedo et al. (2012) found that teenage mothers are less likely to finish secondary education (Kruger & Berthelon, 2012). Once the authors control for certain characteristics at the household level, however, the negative consequences of teenage childbearing are reduced substantially. Another background paper for the same report (Arceo-Gomez & Campos Vazquez, 2011) finds that teenage pregnancy lowers school attendance. Furthermore, early childbearing can affect various dimensions of the mother’s economic outcomes, such as labor market participation and earnings. Arceo-Gomez and Campos Vazquez (2011) find that teenage mothers will have reduced work hours later in life.

Early childbearing is also concerning due to its many associated health risks. For instance, teenage mothers and their children face increased maternal and infant mortality (WHO, 2007, 2014; UNICEF/ECLAC, 2007; Azevedo et al., 2012). Complications from pregnancy and childbirth were the leading causes of death for young women between the ages of 15–19 in developing countries (Center for Global Development, 2012, UNFPA 2013; Nove, Matthews, Neal et al., 2012). Similarly, Cheery et al. (2001) show that pregnant girls between age 15 and 19 are twice as likely to die at childbirth than pregnant women older than 20 years of age. Chen et al. (2006) find an increased risk for pre-term delivery, low birth weight, and neonatal mortality among adolescent mothers. Stillbirths and deaths in the first week of life are 50 percent higher for babies

of adolescent mothers when compared to those of mothers that are 20-30 years old (UNFPA, 2013, citing World Health Organization, 2008). Also, young adolescents are more likely to experience obstructed labor and fistula, which causes chronic incontinence, often resulting in social exclusion (Klugman et al., 2014). For Latin America specifically, Conde-Agudelo et al. (2005) find a number of complications and adverse health outcomes as a result of teenage pregnancy, including a higher danger of postpartum hemorrhage, puerperal endometritis, operative vaginal delivery, episiotomy, low birth weight, preterm delivery, and small-for-gestational-age infants. It is noteworthy though that these consequences are stronger for the youngest sample of mothers (15 years or younger). The health risks associated with early pregnancies are the reason Sedgh et al. (2015) argue that even intended pregnancies to young women are of policy and public health relevance. The fact that the reduction of adolescent birth rate serves as indicator 5.4 for MDG 5 (reduction of maternal mortality) further underlines the policy relevance of this issue.

In terms of family composition, Arceo-Gomez and Campos-Vazquez (2011) demonstrate that in the short run, Mexican teenagers who become pregnant have higher marriage rates than those who do not. Importantly though, they are more likely to separate or divorce in the future compared to non-teenage mothers. With regard to the emotional well-being of adolescent mothers, quantitative evidence is still lacking. The psychological costs related to being pregnant during adolescence are more difficult to assess given a lack of relevant and quality data. Qualitative research can bring value in understanding this specific dimension of the consequences of teenage motherhood, as will be seen in the subsequent chapters.

While the amount of evidence on quantitatively measurable negative (economic, educational, and health-related) outcomes of teenage pregnancy is impressive, a word of caution is needed. First, rigorous research on the consequences of adolescent childbearing in developing countries is scarce (Azevedo et al., 2012). The vast majority of the evidence on impacts of teenage pregnancy is based on research from developed countries (mostly U.S.). Second, if proper controls for endogenous effects are being introduced, effects often reduce significantly or even disappear completely (Azevedo et al., 2012; Geronimus and Korenman, 1992; Greene and Merrick, 2005). It seems like most studies among the vast body of literature have documented associations, rather than causal relations in terms of the negative effects of teenage childbearing on mothers and children. This is because adolescent motherhood is more likely to occur in deprived socio-economic contexts. Isolating the effect of early childbearing and certain unobservable individual characteristics can be difficult. At the same time, while effects reduce when proper controls are introduced, there is still sufficient evidence to consider teenage motherhood as a costly and risky event for the mother and the child (Azevedo et al., 2012).

Finally, it is important to note that the consequences of adolescent childbearing seem to be worse among the more disadvantaged: Kruger and Berthelon (2012) show that negative effects on educational outcomes of the mother are stronger among poor and low-educated households. Similarly, Azevedo et al. (2012) find that negative effects of teenage childbearing on labor market

outcomes in Mexico are stronger among the poor. This is important, specifically in the context of this study, since it may indicate that adolescent mothers from wealthier families might have better support systems available to them to mitigate consequences. Furthermore, these points also raise the question on how reliable it will be to draw conclusions from studies assessing the consequences of adolescent childbearing in developed countries to developing countries' poor populations. In that sense, teenage motherhood is not only a gender issue—it has equity implications beyond gender, involving other social characteristics such as ethnicity, socio-economic background, and location of residence.<sup>4</sup> All of these significantly influence a girl's risk factors for teenage pregnancy, making it much more likely for pregnancy to occur among the most disadvantaged youth. At the same time, its effects are more likely to be negative and stronger among this group, which calls even more so for a better comparative analysis.

The effects of teenage pregnancy are not only limited to the mothers. Children of adolescent mothers are also likely to face lower educational outcomes and to engage in risky behavior. In terms of economic outcomes, children born to adolescent mothers are more likely to be unemployed and have lower earnings (Azevedo et al., 2012; Hoffman, 2008; National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2013; Gueorguieva et al., 2001). However, the evidence on educational effects on children is not conclusive. Using family background controls, Levine et al. (2004) find no effect of early childbearing on academic attainment, but they do find a significant impact on behavioral problems, such as early sexual initiation and fighting. Very few studies actually look at the impact of early childbearing at different points in time. However, Moore et al. (2008) find that the effect of young maternal age decreases over time: while significant negative effects on academic achievements can be observed for children aged 4 to 14, this is not true for their older cohorts (12 to 16 or 18 to 22). Consistent with that, Arias and Lopez-Calva (2012) show that for a sample in Peru, children of adolescent mothers catch up relatively quickly in anthropometric outcomes, so that any differences to children born to older mothers disappear by age five on a number of outcomes. The only characteristic that can still be observed later in life are behavioral problems when they become adolescents. Relatedly, Grogger (2008) finds significantly higher incarceration rates for children born to adolescent mothers. And finally, Francesconi (2008) suggests that children born to teenage mothers tend to have higher adolescent birth rates themselves and are more likely to be economically inactive in their early adult lives. In line with these findings, Maynard (1997) shows that children of teenage mothers are more likely to be indicated for abuse or neglect. A broad body of literature shows the

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<sup>4</sup> Using DHS data for several countries (Bolivia, 2008; Colombia, 2010; Dominican Republic, 2007; Haiti, 2006; Honduras, 2006; and Peru, 2008) Azevedo et al. (2012) present estimates of the probability of becoming a teenage mother. According to those estimates, adolescents with higher levels of education, who live in urban areas and those from higher wealth quintiles are less likely to get pregnant. Furthermore, it has to be noted that socially and economically disadvantaged girls are more likely to carry pregnancies to term compared to their peers who are better off. It is questionable that this has changed significantly since Zelnik and Kantner's statement in the 1980s: "At the moment, abortion remains a major means by rich young women to preventing births they do not wish to have" (Zelnik & Kantner, 1980, p. 237; see also Zelnik et al., 1981). Thus, social exclusion has a twofold (negative) impact on the reproductive outcomes of youth: it is not only strongly correlated with incidence of teenage pregnancy, but also with the decision to keep the child after those pregnancies occur.



importance of family environment for children's cognitive and psychological development. Paternal presence seems particularly important for children's healthy development (Ermisch & Francesconi, 1997; Francesconi et al., 2006 and 2010; Rosenberg & Wilcox, 2006). This may be a relevant point to consider when thinking of the psycho-social development opportunities of the child given that adolescent mothers are more likely to separate or divorce their child's father than non-adolescent mothers.

Moreover, teenage pregnancy may also have negative effects on other household members beyond the mother and child (such as the partner who fathered the child, the parents of the mother, and the siblings of the mother), though evidence on these variables is still inconclusive. Finally, the social costs of teenage pregnancy (while definitely not the center of the attention here) should also be considered. In Mexico, teenage mothers are more likely to participate in social programs and depend on social assistance income (Azevedo et al., 2012). Given these arguments, different governments, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and development agencies have continuously increased their focus on addressing this crucial issue in different regions of the world.

Beyond the impact on the individual, teenage pregnancy is also relevant in the context of the discussion on population dynamics and women's fertility, both issues of global relevance. Women's decisions whether or not to have children, at which moment to have them and the circumstances under which they make these decisions have been at the center of political debates for many years. Beyond mothers' and their children's own well-being, the discussions referred to the broader context of population dynamics and how those affect communities, societies, and specific issues such as food security or climate change, for instance. The contrasting views about the relationship between population growth and poverty range from those that believe that high fertility is one of the main factors behind poverty and that conversely, lowering fertility leads the way to poverty reduction (Merrick, 2002). Others have expressed their views stating that population dynamics are rather irrelevant to poverty reduction and that contraception is a 'private good.'

The 1960s and 1970s were mostly dominated by "alarmist" views of population growth (DeJong, 2000). "The Population Bomb" by Paul Ehrlich (1968) had drawn a very dark and pessimistic picture of the impact of population growth on life on earth, and profoundly marked the discussions around the topic. This negative perspective on population growth goes back to the 18th century when Thomas Malthus published his influential essay<sup>5</sup> arguing that fertility and poverty went hand in hand. Neo-Malthusians following that tradition later on expanded his theory by arguing that investments in a country's infrastructure will be missed if birth rates are high and that the focus has to be limited to meeting immediate necessities. Such lack of investment in the development of societies would impede entire societies from moving out of poverty. This view came to be criticized during the 1980s, and by the 1990s, the prevalent view

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<sup>5</sup> 'An Essay on the Principle of Population' – first published anonymously. London, 1798

was that population dynamics are not central to poverty reduction. An important milestone in the discussion was an influential review of the evidence on the link between population dynamics and economic development conducted by the National Research Council, which concluded that demographic factors might influence a country's economic progress, but that overall, they seemed to be less critical if compared to factors such as poor governance, poor economic policies, or the lack of natural resources. During this period, few stakeholders believed population dynamics to be crucial when designing strategies to reduce poverty and promote economic growth (Merrick, 2002).

As of today, the predominant position seems to be somewhere in the middle. The most common rationale behind policies in the field are based on the assumption that demographic trends are indeed important, but that the benefits of slower population growth on poverty reduction depend on many more factors, including the economic and social status of women and the type and focus of economic policies in countries undergoing demographic change. The risks of population growth are discussed around possible food scarcity and malnutrition as well as climate change (Das Gupta et al., 2011). With regard to food scarcity, some point to the fact that despite a doubling in the world population between 1960 and the end of the century (from three to six billion), global food scarcity and malnutrition did not occur thanks to dramatic improvements in agricultural techniques. Others suggest more caution instead of such optimism. The possible impacts from climate change will make it significantly harder to meet food demand: "Models vary, but the World Bank 2010<sup>6</sup> estimates that to meet the growing demand for food between 2005 and 2055, agricultural productivity will need to rise by 64 percent under the assumptions of the business as usual scenario and by a further 80 percent under the assumption of projected stresses arising from climate change" (Das Gupta et al., 2011). Furthermore, impacts of expected population growth on the environment are another issue of concern. Das Gupta et al. (2011) show that according to current estimates, a 40 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions per head in developed countries between 2000 and 2050 would be offset by the increase in emissions attributable to expected population growth in poorer countries. High fertility rates can also be an obstacle to poverty reduction at the micro level. Das Gupta et al. (2011) show from a review of a large body of evidence that high fertility reduces investments in children and that, conversely, lower fertility is associated with broader indices of household well-being and poverty reduction, such as an improvement in household earnings, improved quality of jobs, etc. Similarly, Merrick (2002) demonstrates that children in large families do not perform as well in school and on intelligence tests than children from small families (as expected, the effect decreases if controlling for economic class, but remains significant). Children in large families also have poorer health outcomes, develop physically worse (possibly through lower-quality maternal care and poorer nutrition), and have lower survival probabilities. High numbers of children also increases women's exposure to the risk of maternal death and health complications, such as fistula. Thus,

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<sup>6</sup> World Development Report 2010 on Development and Climate Change

Merrick (2002) concludes: “Helping women to avoid excess or unwanted fertility helps them, their children and the society in which they live” (p. 44).

When summarizing the debates on population dynamics over the past few decades, the role of the groundbreaking International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994 deserves particular attention. The global consensus achieved in this conference recognized that empowerment of the individual with access to information and services for reproductive health, including voluntary family planning, was essential for sustainable development (Ahmed Obaid, 2009). The ICPD 1994 followed two previous conferences on the topic. At the first population conference in Bucharest in 1974 developing country states argued that population growth rates would inevitably be reduced if the objective of economic development would be addressed. DeJong (2000) cites an emblematic statement of the Indian delegation: “development is the best contraceptive” (p. 943). Ten years later, at the 1984 World Population Conference in Mexico, the U.S.-led position, based on the philosophy that the market decides, marked the overall tone of the conference and can be summarized in population being a “neutral” factor in development (DeJong, 2000). A “new paradigm” in population policy (DeJong, 2000) then emerged in Cairo, shifting the emphasis from a macro concern, with the impact of rapid population growth on economic development, to individual rights in sexuality and reproduction. This consensus was loudly and widely praised later on. It is noteworthy also that the ICPD brought an unprecedented emphasis on gender relations as a critical determinant of reproductive decision-making and sexual behavior. Furthermore, discussions around population and health were consistently framed within a context of social justice. The consensus achieved in the ICPD emphasized women's health and well-being as important in their own right, not primarily in its instrumental value as a means towards the reduction of fertility or child health (McIntosh & Finkle, 1995; Sen et al., 1994). In line with a woman-centered, rights-based approach to family planning, quite recently, Canning et al. (2015) state their view that: “the economic benefits of smaller family size accrue mainly to the family and that fertility decisions should be made by the family. While there are economic costs to having larger families, there are also benefits, including the direct enjoyment that parents get from their children; these are not included in standard measures of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, but they will and should influence families’ decisions” (p. 71).

Years earlier, coinciding with the ICPD, Amartya Sen also expressed his views on the link between population dynamics and development: He not only argued that alarmist perspectives on population growth are not entirely justified on empirical grounds,<sup>7</sup> but more strongly emphasized his ethical concerns regarding those alarmist views’ possibility to “lending themselves towards coercion” (DeJong, 2000, p. 946). He argues that such catastrophic visions treat people involved “not as reasonable beings, allies facing a common problem, but as impulsive and

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<sup>7</sup> Sen (1994) states: “...Since Malthus first published the world population has grown nearly six times larger, while food output and consumption per person are considerably higher now, and there has been an unprecedented increase both in life expectancies and in general living standard.” (p.1)

uncontrolled sources of great social harm, in need of strong discipline” (Sen, 1994, p.1). At the same time, he suggests caution to not dismiss all worries about population dynamics given the acceleration in population growth in recent times. In his lecture during the Preparatory Committee for the ICPD at the UN in New York, Sen strongly argues to encourage broader social development which in his views is not only effective, but also the most ethical way of reducing population growth (Sen, 1994). As will be seen later on, this position may be extremely relevant in the context of my own findings, which indicate that adolescent fertility might be a consequence (and not only a cause) of socioeconomic disadvantage.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Sen directly links fertility reduction to women’s empowerment: “Central to reducing birth rates, then, is a close connection between women’s well-being and their power to make their own decisions and bring about changes in the fertility pattern” (Sen, 1994, p. 13). He clearly sees the reduction in fertility as a direct outcome of the improvement in “women’s status and their ability to make their voices heard” and of “expanded opportunities for schooling and political activity” (Sen, 1994, p. 13).

Sen’s position expressed in the context of the ICPD 1994 reflects his understanding of development as freedom and the principles of his capability approach. He defines freedom positively, as the ability to realize one’s potential. As Duflo (2012) explains: “Freedom is thus directly tied to the notion of capability. Life, good physical health, and some sense of control over one’s destiny are essential capabilities, and freedom requires access to those capabilities.” (p. 15). The capability approach focuses on what individuals are able to do (i.e., capable of). Thus, freedom of choice is of direct importance. Sen’s position around population growth and development directly reminds one of his understanding of agency, and his description of an agent as someone who acts and brings about change. Sen phrases the population ‘problem’ as a development problem and suggests encouraging economic and social development to address it—and thus with it, the consequences from increasing population growth.

While fertility decisions are a private matter and I strongly agree with Sen’s perspective that policies on the topic should by no means lead to coercion of any type, there seems to be a strong rationale for public policy. Fertility and family planning, while certainly not the only or the most important factors in poverty reduction, do matter for poor households and for poor countries. Besides, it has to be noted that fertility decisions when taken in adolescence are often rooted in constraints (Azevedo et al., 2012). Fertility decisions should undoubtedly be the result of choice instead, in line with what Sen (1998) defines as “effective freedom.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Indeed, teenage pregnancies are associated with poor social and economic conditions and prospects (Sedgh et al., 2015). For Latin America specifically, Azevedo et al. (2012), using data from the United Nations Population Division and World Development Indicators, argue that adolescent fertility in Latin American countries correlate positively with poverty and inequality.

<sup>9</sup> The capability approach is centered around people’s ability to live a life they have reason to value. This means that it is based on an ethical evaluation of the content of their options. The mere ability to choose between options is not what is behind this concept. Rather, it implies an assessment of whether the agent’s goals are in some way

In addition, teenage pregnancy is a particular case: here, the human rights of children are at stake. Thus, I will argue that the role of public policy in securing the transitions from childhood to adolescence and to adulthood is great. Beyond that argument, governments may have to be involved in intimately private decisions, also because the various types of investments parents make in their children is the most important factor determining the outcomes for those children. Thus, I am taking a normative position with regard to the fact that such decision should be made out of choice and not constraints (such as, for instance, representing a young woman's only option to leave her house; the lack of access to or the lack of possibility to negotiate contraceptives with her partner; the pressure of outsiders on her having a child; or the transition to adulthood in the absence of alternative strategies, to name just a few that will emerge from the findings presented in later chapters).

Summarizing, teenage pregnancy should not only be considered a 'problem' given the economic, educational, and health-related adverse outcomes for mother and child, but also because it often is a manifestation of constraints and the absence of "effective freedom". Furthermore though, teenage pregnancy decisions – as fertility decisions more generally – may be rooted in constraints and at the same time, may have implications for poverty reduction, and inequality. So, beyond the individual outcomes, the issue may be important from a more general perspective on developing societies. This point will be picked up again and discussed in the Conclusions of this work.

## 1.2 Teenage motherhood in Latin America: A case study conducted in Nicaragua

Latin America shows some particular characteristics when analyzing teenage pregnancy across the region. While rates are declining worldwide, Latin America has shown a remarkably slow pace of decline compared to other regions, which left the region second among all world regions, only showing lower rates than Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>10</sup> In comparison to countries of similar characteristics, teenage pregnancy is unexpectedly high in Latin American countries (given its GDP and education levels) (Azevedo et al., 2012). It is also higher given the region's total fertility rate, its unemployment rate, female labor participation rate, and its public health expenditures as a share of GDP (Azevedo, 2012). This shows the peculiarity of the issue for the Latin America

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reasonable—a person who harms or humiliates others would not, in this view, be exerting agency (Deneulin and Shahani, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> There are basically two indicators to measure teenage pregnancy or motherhood. First, the percentage of women 15-19 who are mothers or pregnant with their first child by selected background characteristics (indicator used by DHS); second, the adolescent birth rate (which serves as the MDG indicator and is also the one represented under the World Bank's World Development Indicators). Both indicators have obvious limitations – the first one is only available for years for which health surveys exist, plus it doesn't account for multiple births, stillborn babies, etc. The second one relies on administrative or census data, which may impact the quality and completeness of that data. Neither of them can really account for miscarriages or abortion, etc. Given the easier accessibility of the latter, I opted to predominantly refer to the adolescent birth rate in this work.

region. According to Azevedo et al. (2012), the only dimension under which rates are as expected is inequality. Inequality indicators seem to better explain Latin America's high adolescent fertility rate. Relatedly, Kearney and Levine (2011) show for the U.S. that a variation in income inequality across states can serve as an explanation of geographic variation in teenage pregnancy rates in the U.S. The authors explain this by stating that being poor and marginalized within an unequal society contributes to low perceptions of economic success.

Another interesting fact about teenage pregnancy in Latin America compared to other regions is that here one finds very large wealth disparity in adolescent birth rates. Adolescents in the poorest 20 percent of households are almost five times as likely (4.8) to give birth as those in the wealthiest 20 percent (adolescent fertility rate of 148 versus 31, respectively, UNFPA, 2013). More concerning though, rates have dropped significantly for the wealthiest quintile, which is not true for the poorest, thus indicating a trend towards an increasing gap between these groups.

An additional factor that is worth emphasizing, but difficult to measure, is the role of norms (gender norms and norms around female sexuality) in the region. The important and often cited essay by Evelyn Stevens (1977) on 'marianismo' in Latin America as being the other side of 'machismo' in the region is an important reference in this context. Marianismo refers to the Virgin Mary as the ideal of the Latin American woman—selfless, sexless, and a mother. According to Stevens, Mary is the model to which Latin American women grow up aspiring to, which has clear implications on sexual and reproductive decision-making, behavior, and overall life decisions. In Latin America, the Catholic Church (and more recently protestant churches, which are on the rise<sup>11</sup>) has a substantial influence on reproductive and sexual health. This influence seems to be manifest not only in prevalent values and norms, but also in the political and legal spheres. For instance, in almost all Latin American countries, abortion is illegal, with some exceptions based on the specific circumstances of the pregnancy (including health risks of the mother). Only Cuba, Guyana, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, and French Guyana have decriminalized abortion (Guttmacher Institute, 2016).

In the following study, I will be focusing on one specific country case in Latin America, Nicaragua. Nicaragua is a compelling case in several ways. First, when initiating this research in 2013, Nicaragua had the highest adolescent birth rate in Latin America. Latest data indicates that at 86.9 births (per 1,000 women ages 15-19) in 2016 Nicaragua has the second highest adolescent fertility rate in the region, only lower than the one of the Dominican Republic (compared to the regional average of 62.4). Second, in terms of gender equality, the country presents a very contradictory picture. Significant progress has been made on the legal and institutional framework as well as in some specific dimensions of gender equality where the country figures

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<sup>11</sup> Since the revolution there has been a pluralization of religious institutions and influences in the country (Ortega Hegg and Castillo, 2006). As seen in several countries throughout Latin America, the Evangelic churches have grown significantly and promote conservative positions on sexual morality. Their target audience are often the poor and extremely poor. Both groups, the Catholic and Evangelic churches influence values and norms in society even beyond their own educational systems.

among the region's top performers. At the same time, in other dimensions of gender equality, the country is significantly lagging behind. Relatedly, Jenkins (2008) argues that while formal equality between men and women was promoted in Nicaragua during the 1980s, women's reproductive function and its link to the domestic sphere remained stable despite the Nicaraguan revolution and its efforts to promote gender equality.

Women played a very active role in the revolution. In 1969, the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional) announced its intention to "abolish the odious discrimination that women have been subjected to compared to men" (Bayard de Volo, 2001, p. 5). Women were recruited into the guerrilla ranks with between 25 and 30 percent of the combatants being female (Ramírez-Horton, 1982, p. 152). They occupied significant leadership roles: for instance, Dora Maria Tellez led the takeover of Leon in June 1979 and Monica Baltodano organized the final takeover of Managua (Bayard de Volo, 2001). At the same time, while women were key actors in the revolution (as combatants and political leaders), Bayard de Volo (2001) shows that "women primarily organized and were organized through their maternal identity" (p. xvi). While women also organized over strategic, feminist demands, collective action was often centered on motherhood, according to the author. The Sandinista revolution and its subsequent revolutionary government promoted gender roles emphasizing the role and imagery of motherhood very prominently. The ideal of the revolutionary Nicaraguan woman is well depicted in the very famous photograph of the 'Miliciana de Waswalito'<sup>12</sup>. A photograph taken in 1984 of a beautiful and smiling young woman with a rifle on her back while at the same time holding and nursing her infant. The woman not only shows preparedness to fight for her country (and the principles of the revolution) with a gun (which is, in many ways, a transcendence of traditional gender roles), but at the same time she is also complying with her role as a mother. As also shown in Bayard de Volo (2001), the image of the Nicaraguan woman as a mother proved effective in mobilizing women for the revolution.

In 1990 the Sandinistas lost the elections to the conservative Violetta Chamorro. While the first female president of the country, commonly referred to as Doña Violeta in Nicaragua, presented a very traditional view of women's role in society during her campaign and subsequently reversed several strides achieved by the Sandinistas in favor of women's rights. In 2011, Daniel Ortega was reelected under the slogan "Christianity, socialism and solidarity." In that same year, a very controversial moment exemplified the position of the FSLN government vis-à-vis sexual and reproductive rights of women: a case of a 12-year-old who was pregnant as a result of being raped became public, and obliged to have the child as a consequence of the criminalization of abortion. Daniel Ortega's wife Rosario Murillo (since 2017 Vice-President of Nicaragua) commented the birth of this child as "a miracle, a sign from God"<sup>13</sup> while Ortega said his government was "the

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<sup>12</sup> Access online at: <http://ahabbestad.blogspot.com/2011/05/miliciana-de-waswalito-by-orlando.html>

<sup>13</sup> In the Spanish original: "un milagro, un signo de Dios".

enemy of Herodes”<sup>14 15</sup>. The legal, historical, and political setting for gender equality and gender outcomes in Nicaragua deserve a discussion in a separate chapter (Chapter 3).

### 1.3 This research project

Much of the existing literature on the topic of teenage pregnancy is concentrated on patterns of sexual activity, premarital childbearing, contraceptive use, condom use, and on the risk of STDs (among others, Anarfi, 1997; Herold et al., 1992; Konde-Lule et al., 1997; Ruiz, 1994; Singh & Wulf, 1990). In contrast, the focus of this work lies at the decision-making process of young women related to teenage pregnancy. Different from economic research on fertility decisions, which assumes rational decision-making based on a cost and benefit analysis (Becker, 1960), sociological literature has discussed multiple and overlapping factors that might play into decision-making processes related to fertility.

A multitude of factors influence fertility and family formation decisions; yet, rational choice models seem to have particularly limited explanation utility on those critical decisions. Choices and decisions in childbearing are complex and nuanced processes. Theoretically, several levels of choice and decision-making lead to the outcome of becoming a mother: from the general conception of motherhood, to more specific moments of deciding whether to have sexual intercourse, whether to use contraceptives and which form; whether to use emergency contraception; and whether to abort or not.

Social norms and what they define to be acceptable and not acceptable in a certain society are essential to understanding the context in which decisions are being made. For instance, perceptions of women's and men's role in society and within the home have an impact on how individuals perceive themselves, imagine themselves in the future, and construct their life goals. Similarly, the deeper meaning and value of motherhood in a certain society, or in a certain subgroup, might have a very strong impact on if, when, and how women decide to have children. More specifically, social acceptance or desirability of having children at a certain age and at a certain number might vary according to the context. While in some contexts it might be acceptable and even desired to sequentially balance career and family, it might be more common and desired to integrate both simultaneously into one's life in other contexts or to give dominance to one at the cost of the other. Social interactions, particularly with peers and family, are also significant in shaping individual preferences and decisions. Finally, aspirations for the future, goals, and life plans are fundamental to understanding fertility decision processes. Whether or not reproduction is a key goal at the center of one's life or one amongst other things to achieve

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<sup>14</sup> In the Spanish original: “enemigo de Herodes”.

<sup>15</sup> El Pais, November 2 2011: Carlos Salinas: ‘Daniel Ortega utiliza el embarazo de una niña en su campaña de reelección’. Access online at: [https://elpais.com/internacional/2011/11/02/actualidad/1320251317\\_399319.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2011/11/02/actualidad/1320251317_399319.html)



in life, these preferences clearly have an impact on how women and girls make decisions towards having children or not.

This research embarks from the assumption that the only way to effectively address the issue of teenage childbearing is to understand decisions of young women (and their partners) around pregnancy better—and to understand their decision-making processes. According to the stories of the young women, as we will see later, these are often not calculated decisions that weigh expected advantages or disadvantages. In this sense, they are not really ‘decisions’ in a literal sense. Hence, it is more important to understand the decision-making process and not only their outcomes. The limitations of assessing decision-making on fertility with quantitative methods indicate the added value of qualitative methods in this particular research. The objective of this study is to understand the often very subtle concepts, perceptions, beliefs, and influencing factors that may lead to different fertility outcomes among young women. In that sense, this work aims to move away from binary explanations of wanted versus unwanted fertility. As part of the interviews, one of the middle-class interviewees emphasized this aspect by explaining the unplanned pregnancy of a friend of hers at the age of 24 as “unexpected” (in the original: “inesperado”) and not as “undesired” (“no deseado”). By distinguishing these two, she clearly points to the complex nature of fertility decision-making processes, which cannot be captured in binary concepts. Therefore, with this work, I aim to uncover contextual factors, motivations, preferences, drivers, and barriers of effective decision-making in order to shed more light on the complex processes at stake. As already mentioned, choices in childbearing are complex and nuanced. Notably though, for most adolescents (even more so for adolescents below age 15), pregnancies are not the result of choice. According to UNFPA (2013): “For most adolescents below age 18, and especially for those younger than 15, pregnancies are not the result of a deliberate choice. To the contrary, pregnancies are generally the result of an absence of choices and of circumstances beyond a girl’s control” (p. ix). However, this statement needs to be somewhat nuanced, specifically if applied to Latin America, including Nicaragua. While teenage pregnancy rates in Latin America are unexpectedly high, they are not associated with forced child marriages as in some other contexts, in which there is a very clear absence of choice for the young mothers. In Latin America, the choices and decisions of young women regarding adolescent motherhood are framed within a setting of poverty, inequality, low-quality schooling, traditional-religious values, and gender norms as will be seen later. Even if choices are available, they are often not clear-cut decisions in favor or against a pregnancy (which is implied often by quantitative data on that topic). The qualitative approach adopted in this work will help bring a deeper understanding of these decision-making processes of young women and men in Nicaragua, exploring their expectations, aspirations, motivations, norms, attitudes, and behaviors. A fundamental hypothesis of this research is that one of the main factors underlying pregnancy and motherhood during adolescence in several contexts of the world is an absence of effective decision-making capacity.

This research aims at enabling a more complete understanding of the drivers of young women's decisions, concretely a) the motivators or the conditions under which women make the decisions to become mothers; b) the reasons why they decide to actively postpone pregnancy; or c) the contexts and factors that may constrain young women from making free, self-controlled, information-based, and active decisions and implementing those. While the main contribution of this work will be focused on the micro level, it will be introduced by presenting and analyzing the socio-economic context. Following Coleman (1990), an explanation of certain social phenomena (such as in that case high rates of teenage pregnancy) should include a macro-to-micro and a micro-to-macro transition. That is, the analysis of social phenomena should include an analysis of how macro factors create constraints on actors; how actors choose actions and make decisions under these constraints; and finally, how the actions accumulate to the macro level (including which institutions and structural issues are involved in this accumulation). Following this approach, a chapter on political, historical and social context will introduce the (macro) context for Nicaragua. In this way, this proposed work will start from the structural level, move to the individual level, and back towards the structural level in the Conclusions. This path is based on an assumption that potential policy options or suggestions would not be exclusively targeted to the individual level, but also to the structural level. Nonetheless, the key contribution of this work will be a better understanding of processes at the micro level.

This research builds on the qualitative background study for Azevedo et al. (2012) conducted in Ecuador as well as on several dedicated studies on the subject that have been conducted in Nicaragua (UNFPA, 1999; Guttmacher Institute, 2006, 2007, 2010; Benítez, Waters & Gordillo-Tobar, 2012; Zelaya, 1997; PATH, 2012; Castillo Aramburu, 2005; Blandón, 2006; Antillón, 2012; UNFPA/CANTERA, 2012). It aims to broaden the commonly applied risk factor analysis around access to and knowledge of contraception given its limited effectiveness. As Harden (2009) shows, research illustrates how traditional approaches to reduce teenage pregnancy rates, such as sex education and better sexual health services, are not effective on their own. The theoretical value added from this research is the specific focus on gender relations and gender norms, aspirations, and agency. Furthermore, the empirical value added is the recruitment of participants from 'under-researched' groups related to this topic, which will allow an additional set of conclusions comparing different groups. The participants included in this study are: young women who became mothers during adolescence from poor and middle-class backgrounds, young women who have not become mothers during adolescence from poor and middle-class backgrounds, fathers of children born to adolescent mothers, and key informants.

As discussed earlier, teenage pregnancy is a concerning issue given its implications for the mother, the child, other household members, communities, and societies—and for poverty reduction overall. It is an issue of relevance for global development. While showing different expressions in different contexts (and probably grounded in different motivations and constraints), the results from this very particular case study can be informative beyond the concrete case of Nicaragua. Insights on young women's decision-making processes around fertility may help direct the

thinking and research agenda on that same phenomenon in places other than Nicaragua (if cautiously contextualized, of course). Specifically, this study's findings on the potential limitations as to how poor women make decisions related to their bodies and, more broadly, their lives, will hopefully help shape answers locally in Nicaragua and beyond. In the following chapters, I will first give an overview of the research design (Chapter 2). I will then move on to present an overview of the context in which the data was collected, diving into the historical, political, and socio-economic context in Nicaragua, including a portrayal of (quantitative) gender outcomes along a number of different dimensions (Chapter 3). The following chapters will discuss the main results of the work, starting with a summary and discussion of the different type of decision-making processes encountered in the data (Chapter 4); the theoretical framework on agency and identity development (Chapter 5); the role of information, knowledge, and access to contraception (Chapter 6); of gender norms (Chapter 7), of poverty, vulnerability, and lack of opportunities (Chapter 8), and the importance of (and differences in access to) supportive and enabling environments (Chapter 9). Chapter 10 will then provide a discussion of the consequences of teenage motherhood, focusing on those that will impact the further enhancement of women's agency and identity development. The conclusions chapter will summarize and discuss the main findings of this work.

A more extended overview of the methodological approach can be found in Annex 1. Annex 2 presents the original citations from the transcribed interviews in Spanish as well as their corresponding English translations. The latter are used throughout the main body of the text to illustrate specific findings and arguments with original data. The research instruments (both in Spanish and English translation) are presented in Annex 3.

## 2 Research design, data collection, and analysis

The purpose of this qualitative study was to collect in-depth data and contextual information on the patterns, trends, and circumstances of decision-making processes and choices made by young women and men with regard to childbearing in Nicaragua, comparing different socio-economic groups. Annex 1 provides a more detailed overview and reflection on the methodology of this study. The main research questions pursued in this dissertation were as follows:

- Why, how, and under which circumstances do some girls choose to become mothers and others choose not to become mothers?
- What are the circumstances for the girls who did not intentionally become mothers, but did not decide against becoming mothers either (and today are mothers)?
- What is the role of the boys and men who father the children of adolescent girls and how do they participate in or influence the processes of choice and decision?

Qualitative methods are best suited to respond to the above-mentioned research questions for a number of reasons. The principle of openness is characteristic to qualitative inquiry as opposed to quantitative methods, which are appropriate to verify previously defined hypotheses. In addition, theoretically, qualitative methods allow for explorations of agency, aspirations, emotions, intra-household and community-level dynamics, social norms, and gender roles and therefore, are well suited to facilitate the exploration of the questions that are at the center of this dissertation: the decision-making processes around teenage childbearing. While surveys can aim to differentiate between ‘intended’ and ‘unintended’ pregnancies, choices and decisions around childbearing do not follow a binary model. Furthermore, there are obvious limitations in using yes/no questions to retrospectively assess whether a mother intended to get pregnant. Subsequent bonding with the baby as well as potentially negative or positive reactions from peers and family might influence the way the interviewee responds. Qualitative research, in a more exploratory way, can mitigate these difficulties by assessing the circumstances, feelings, and reactions of the expectant mother, which is where I believe some of the added value of this research is.

Qualitative methods allow for going deeper and exploring more in-depth the conditions and motivations that led to the pregnancy by inquiring into stories of individuals and hereby relying on the understanding of the context for that individual. Context is particularly important to understand complex decisions, such as the question whether or not and when or under which conditions to have a child. Finally, exploring pregnancy and sexuality involves the posing of very intimate and personal questions—another reason to favor the use of the qualitative approach. In a qualitative in-depth interview, the interviewer typically spends more time with the interviewee, initiating the conversation with less personal and difficult questions, then slowly establishing a rapport with the interviewee, who may feel more comfortable sharing more personal details.

The overall sample included six subsamples as presented in the below table (Table 1). Recruitment criteria were defined based on the main research questions. The reason behind the identification of the four sub-samples of women affected (not including key informants or men) was based on the review of literature indicating that there are significant differences between social groups, with the poor usually being more likely to become teenage mothers (Heilborn & Cabral, 2011; Azevedo et al., 2012; Kearney & Levine, 2011). At the same time, the link between teenage pregnancies and (the lack of) opportunities has also been broadly highlighted in the (mostly quantitative) literature on the issue.

The design of the study applied purposeful sampling. Cases were selected because they were expected to be: “information rich and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon, not empirical generalizations from a sample to a population.” (Patton 2015, p. 46).

The identification of these “typical cases” (see Patton 2015, p. 268) was based on three criteria: i) poor versus middle-class; ii) age (currently 18/20 - 24 years old<sup>16</sup>); iii) pregnancy experience between 15 and 19 years of age versus no pregnancy experience during that time frame. This strategy was validated by key informants who confirmed this to be a reliable way to identify ‘typical’ cases. Participants were recruited by a local research team, which consisted of three female interviewers and one male interviewer, with the support of people from the community or NGOs. Ciudad Sandino was identified as the main community for recruitment of poor participants, mostly given the high levels of poverty among the inhabitants. A smaller number of poor girls with pregnancy experience were recruited through a local NGO in the city of Managua.<sup>17</sup> The recruitment of middle-class participants was more challenging. Middle-class women are more dispersed geographically and tend to spend less time in their houses, which makes it hard to recruit by knocking on their doors (as was done with the poor). For that reason, the team had to resort to individual contacts to recruit the sub-sample of middle-class women with pregnancy experience. The sub-sample of middle-class women without pregnancy experience was recruited from a local university (Universidad Centroamericana, UCA) through snowball sampling. The men included in the sample were approached through an NGO that promotes gender equality through trainings, capacity building, and awareness raising.<sup>18</sup>

It is important to note though that neither the poor nor the middle-class participants recruited for this study were selected based on a strictly monetary definition of poverty/middle-class (see Ferreira et al., 2012)<sup>19</sup> given the difficulties faced during the pilot in resorting to an income or

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<sup>16</sup> The age range was defined taking into consideration the ethical implications of interviewing minors (hence, the decision to include women only 18 and older) and the fact that a potential teenage pregnancy experience should not have occurred too many years ago (hence upper boundary of 24 years).

<sup>17</sup> Since several of the informants are still engaged with the NGO (some even as staff), the name of the organization will not be revealed to protect the privacy of the interviewees.

<sup>18</sup> Similarly, to protect privacy of participants the name of the NGO will not be revealed.

<sup>19</sup> Ferreira et al. (2012) defined four economic groups based on the concept of economic security: (i) the poor who are those individuals with a per capita income below \$4 per person per day; (ii) the vulnerable who are with high

consumption-based classification (participants were not able to respond to respective filter questions). Instead, a combination of indicators related to area of residence and individual/family characteristics were taken into consideration for recruitment purposes such as the quality of housing, sanitation, number of dependents per income, type of jobs within the family etc. in the case of the poor. With regards to middle-class, key informants had identified the following criteria that define the middle-class in Nicaragua (independent of primarily monetary criteria): the ability to hire domestic workers for cleaning and child care; quality of housing; reliable access to electricity and air conditioning; absence of social assistance; a focus on professional careers; and children's enrollment in private universities. These criteria reflect the idea that class goes beyond economic capital and is also constructed subjectively, including by the actual members of a certain class (see Annex 1).

At the same time, it needs to be emphasized that the interviews and actual realities of research participants point to a) a mix in terms of depth of poverty among the poor interviewees with some being less disadvantaged and deprived than others, and b) a general tendency for upper middle-class status among the participants in the middle-class groups.

Table 1: Overview of the research sample

Semi-structured in-depth interviews with:	Total number of interviews conducted	Number of interviews conducted by myself
POOR: Women (18-24 years old) <sup>20</sup> who became mothers between age 15 and 19	31	11
POOR: Women (20-24 years old) who did not have a pregnancy by age 19	19	3
MIDDLE-CLASS: Women (18-24 years old) who became mothers between age 15 and 19	5	2
MIDDLE-CLASS: Women (20-24 years old) who did not have a pregnancy by age 19	6	2
Men who father children of adolescent mothers	12	1
Key informants (representatives of international development agencies, local researchers, representatives of NGOs engaged in issues related to gender and youth)	9	6
Validation interviews with key informants	9	9

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risk of falling back into poverty and have incomes between \$4 to \$10 per person per day; (iii) the middle-class who are those individuals living with incomes between \$10 and \$50 per person per day; and (iv) the rich who are those with incomes above \$50 per person per day (all in 2005 US\$ PPP).

<sup>20</sup> Only women and men 18 years or older were included in the sample given that interviewing minors would have possibly been more challenging since it would have required parental consent.

The primary research interest in the decision of the poor (given the much higher adolescent fertility rates among them) is reflected in the significantly greater number of individual research participants among the poor.

There is another particularity to the sample that is noteworthy to mention. While the goal was to recruit poor women with and without pregnancy experience during adolescence, it turned out that the criteria led to a sub-sample of poor women without pregnancy during adolescence, with 6 out of 12 recruited in Ciudad Sandino having had a child after adolescence. Thus, at the moment of interviewing, these young women actually were mothers, with most of the pregnancies occurring just right after adolescence (at the age of 20 or 21).

In addition to young women and their partners, the study drew on key informant interviews. Key informants are people with specific knowledge on a certain topic who can shed light on particular aspects of the main topic under analysis, given their specific expertise or insights. These interviews relied on a broad range of experts: gender specialists, representatives of the women's movement, education specialists, social workers in Ciudad Sandino, and sociologists working on youth and/or gender issues in Nicaragua. Their perspectives on the issue were extremely helpful to shed light on a multitude of issues that contextualize teenage pregnancies in the country (such as cultural, social, political, and historic factors). Not only was this essential for the design of the research instruments, but even more so for the analysis of the data afterwards.

Field work was conducted in June and July 2014 in Managua by myself and four local researchers (three female and one male). Interviews in Ciudad Sandino with poor women and two fathers were conducted in person in the participants' houses. This was particularly useful to collect additional qualitative data through observation. As Owen (2008) states: "Conducting research in participants' natural environments is essential. Researchers must meet participants where they are, in the field, so that data collection occurs while people are engaging in their everyday practices" (p. 547). Family members took care of the children during the interviews. Participants recruited through the NGOs were interviewed at the agency's facilities, and middle-class participants were interviewed in a mix of settings, including their homes, at UCA, in other neutral settings such as coffee shops, and in two cases, by Skype video call. Due to the sensitivity of the issues addressed in the interviews, the team's male researcher conducted 10 of the 12 interviews with men based on the assumption that men would be more comfortable to share sensitive details about their relationships, sexuality, concerns, etc. with a male interviewer. During field work, field notes were also taken which then served as the basis of the regular discussion meetings with the local research team. After the finalization of the first data review, in June 2015, I returned to Nicaragua to a) explore more in-depth some of the themes emerging from the data, b) deepen information on some contextual factors arising from the data, c) validate some of the key findings. I met with the local research team to go over some general questions that had come up during the first review of the data, and I conducted additional key informant interviews to validate some of the emerging findings.

Ciudad Sandino is a municipality within the department of Managua with an estimated population of approximately 75,000 people. The main road leading into the municipality reveals a rather urban image: the mayor's office, a supermarket, police station, a health center, mobile phone shops, and a very vivid street life. In that central area of the municipality, there is also a relatively large street market with small businesses selling textiles, food, household equipment, etc. Most interviews were conducted in a radius of about a 5-10 minute car ride from this center. The areas adjacent to the main center are predominantly residential, but feature small shops in people's houses and bars. Many children play in the streets and in public spaces such as baseball squares. Houses vary in quality—some are built in solid materials, while some are composed by different types of materials. Several interviewees live with extended families, with more than five people under one roof. All houses visited had televisions, beds, and kitchen areas. Sanitation conditions are diverse, with toilets mostly located outside the house. People keep their houses very clean (the young women referred to cleaning the house as one of the main, common activities in a regular day). Some people have houses with cement floors, others have open floors, and some live partially in improvised extended rooms. At least two study participants were permanently sleeping in a patio due to lack of space in the house. Few interviewees had motor vehicles, though some had bicycles. To go to Managua, people take a public bus or arrange a ride with someone in the community. Since there are a lot of unpaved streets in the municipality, heavy loads of dust accumulate in the air. Having always been a rather poor municipality but closely connected with Managua, Ciudad Sandino has historically benefited from the presence of NGOs, according to key informants familiar with the area.

The research instruments (see Annex 3) were developed to focus on the key areas of interest: decision-making around fertility, social norms, aspirations, and opportunities. The instruments were developed with the goal to cover the following thematic categories: family of origin, friendships, community context, daily routine, preferences, aspirations, relationship with current partner, relationship with the father of the child, sexuality, and pregnancy event. Since the overall approach was one of life-story narratives, prioritizing a natural evolvement of the interview, the guidance to all interviewers was that each of these thematic blocks should be introduced at the participant's pace. The instruments were adjusted after the pilot. They were shortened to avoid repetition and to leave out questions that seemed superfluous.

All interviewers were trained in a team workshop prior to fieldwork. This ensured that the same ethical and confidentiality standards would be applied in all interviews. During recruitment, people were informed about the topic of the interview and the purpose of the study. Prior to the actual interview, the young woman in the community who facilitated the recruitment shared information about the purpose of the study, the potential sensitivities and that interviewees will have a right to withdraw at any moment if they do not feel comfortable. During the actual interview, but before starting the recording, they were once more reminded of the objective of the study, told that sensitive questions might arise, and that they could stop the recording or the entire interview at any time or decline to answer specific questions. Oral consent was given by all



interviewees prior to starting the recording and the actual interview. To avoid re-victimization of participants who had experienced violence, the interviewers reassured them about their right to stop the interview or take a break at any time. No current or ongoing cases of violence were mentioned by the interviewees. The episodes of victimization that did emerge during interviews were past exposure to violence with victims, meanwhile being safe from the perpetrators. After the interviews, interviewers gave support and advice, reassuring the interviewee, and clearly signaling empathy.

There are a few limitations to the study that need to be mentioned upfront. First, the study elaborates on past events. The retrospective character of the study may have implications for truthfulness of responses and open ways for interviewees' responses to be influenced by what they experienced between the pregnancy/birth and the present. Second, the study was conducted only in Managua and around Managua (thus, in urbanized areas). This means that the findings cannot necessarily be transferred to rural areas of Nicaragua, a point that was emphasized by several key informants. Third, the study has several limitations related to recruitment. Ideally, a larger number of middle-class women with pregnancy experience would have taken part in the study. Since recruitment of this group was organized through personal contacts of the local team, certain biases may have driven that outreach (such as, for instance, a network focused on rather liberal schools). This has implications for several key areas the study touched upon during the interviews. Fathers of children born to adolescent mothers were also difficult to recruit. Fathers that were approached in Ciudad Sandino often declined participation, referring to busy work schedules and a need to rest on weekends. Thus, the local team turned to an NGO working with young men to facilitate recruitment. Given these participants' exposure to interventions by this NGO, there is potential for a bias in the answers of these men. Some of the women in the group of poor with pregnancy experience were recruited through an NGO that works with adolescent girls in crisis such as violence, neglect, and drug abuse. This potentially led to an oversampling of women with histories of abuse. However, cautious analysis can prevent the drawing of false conclusions based on this sub-sample. Fourth, because the data was collected by five interviewers, different styles and priorities emerged in the audio files and transcripts. The opportunity to experience the context in which the interview is set adds significant value to the analysis process: "To understand fully the complexities of a situation, direct participation in and observation of the phenomenon of interest is a particularly fruitful method" (Patton, 2015, p. 27). It became clear that a more ethnographic approach to this study would have further enriched the endeavor. The young women interviewed drew on concepts, categories, stereotypes, narratives, and world views based in their communities. A more lasting exposure to these communities would have surely helped contextualize and understand these issues even more profoundly.

The analysis of the study followed the key strategies to be applied in qualitative inquiry as put forward in Patton (2015). Each interview was recorded and fully transcribed. I first listened to all the audio as those may transport some additional meanings and nuances compared to the

transcripts regarding atmosphere and emotional aspects. The analysis process was conducted in a circular approach and through a deep immersion into each interview: multiple rounds of reading the data, starting with an inductive perspective which served to identify themes, motives, patterns, and striking moments, case by case. “The mind-set that is critical in open inquiry is to expect the unexpected, look for it, and see where it leads you” (Patton, 2015, p. 12). During a first review of the data, the coding process was initiated in a very open way, with the assignment of very broad codes to specific text passages, to then more and more specific levels of detail. During additional rounds of reading and analysis, more detailed levels of coding were introduced. The coding process built the main foundation for the next, the interpretative phase when recurring themes were examined. After an initial analysis, I organized the data along selected themes in an excel matrix. This served the purpose to establish an inventory of themes and to facilitate the analysis. Finally, the memo-writing, the coding, and the data organization in themes supported the overall analysis and interpretation of the data. “Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but surely patterned world” (Patton, 2015, p. 570). Analysis also included the establishing of references to relevant literature and key informant interviews as well as the validation conducted through the second round of key informant interviews, during which some of the themes emerging from the data were deepened or validated and information on some contextual factors was deepened.

### 3 The socio-economic context in Nicaragua

The following chapter will provide a more in-depth perspective on the context in Nicaragua. First, I will elaborate on the historical and political background, which is crucial for understanding the status of women in the country today. Next, I will give a brief overview of poverty and inequality trends. This will be followed by a section that sheds light on women's agency in Nicaragua and how it is reflected in political participation, sexual and reproductive health, and violence against women. I will then focus on two important issues: on educational attainment and on the low quality of education. Then, I will present an overview of labor and employment outcomes for women and men.

The following sections are based on the review of existing literature as well as on two main World Bank data platforms consulted: the LAC Equity Lab and the World Development Indicators. The LAC Equity Lab is a data-sharing platform featuring the latest microdata, indicators, tools, and analytics on poverty, shared prosperity, inequality, and equity in Latin America and the Caribbean. The LAC Equity Lab uses SEDLAC data, the Socio-Economic Database for Latin America and Caribbean, which is produced by the University of La Plata's Center for Distributional, Labor and Social Studies (CEDLAS) and The World Bank's Poverty Global Practice. It aims to improve the comparability of social and economic statistics across 25 countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region. It involves the harmonization of household survey variables in eight categories: income, demographics, education, employment, infrastructure, durable goods and services, and aggregate welfare. Furthermore, I used the World Development Indicators (WDI, World Bank) for the indicators that were not easily available on LAC Equity Lab. The main difference between WDI and LAC Equity Lab is that the latter is updated on a more frequent basis and thus, there may be differences in the data retrieved from both platforms.<sup>21</sup> Given its much broader scope, the majority of the data presented in the following chapter stem from WDI (if not otherwise specified).

#### 3.1 Political and historical context<sup>22</sup>

Nicaragua has experienced impactful societal changes within the last few decades and the most decisive one was the Sandinista revolution at the end of the 1970s. In Nicaragua, the Somoza family had been in power since 1937. Their governance was marked by inequality, corruption, violence, and torture (Kinzer, 2007). In 1972, an earthquake destroyed most of the capital city of Managua, killed over 11,000 and injured about 20,000 people. Three quarters of the city's housing were destroyed and a quarter million people became homeless (Brown, Ward, & Plafker, 1973).

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<sup>21</sup> Data presented subsequently was first retrieved between November 1 and 5, 2016 from both platforms and updated wherever more recent data was available in May 2018.

<sup>22</sup> The following section is based on key informant interviews as well as the references mentioned for specific parts.

As a consequence, the economy and government of the city, and to a large extent the entire country, were severely disrupted.

The Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) was originally founded in 1960 by middle-class university students who opposed the Somoza dynasty (Dore & Weeks, 1992). The movement soon evolved into a coalition between students, peasants, and parts of the Catholic Church. It was very heterogeneous and lacked a unifying ideology, except for the conviction that Nicaragua needed to be freed from the domination of the Somoza family, and a new order should provide more benefits to the poor population (Dore & Weeks, 1992). “To label it Marxist or socialist distorted the nature of the movement beyond recognition” (Dore & Weeks, 1992, p. 24/25). In January 1978, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, the editor of *La Prensa*, a leftist newspaper in Managua, was shot dead, his family accused the Somoza regime for ordering the murder. The murder was followed by riots in Managua, which evidenced the broader support to the Sandinistas’ cause among the population.

The Catholic Church had a very important role in the Nicaraguan revolution: “The revolution in Nicaragua was the first of its kind to be accomplished with the mass support of Christians, a fact that cannot fail to influence the further development of revolutionary movements in the whole of Latin America, whose inhabitants are predominantly Christian.” (Ernesto Cardenal in *Crisis Magazine*, 1987). Ernesto Cardenal was probably the most prominent representative among the liberation theologians in Nicaragua who got actively involved in the revolution. He became Minister of Culture after the Sandinista’s victory. Importantly though, the Catholic Church was internally divided between leftist supporters following liberation theology, who were supportive of the revolution on the one hand, and their conservative opponents on the other, following the side of John Paul II and its opposition to the revolution (and liberation theology more generally). During his famous visit to Nicaragua in 1983, the Pope strongly criticized the active involvement of parts of the Church in the revolution and openly addressed five priests holding government positions at the time, insinuating they may threaten the unity of the church (Riding, NYT, March 5, 1983). However, the anti-Somoza front within the Catholic Church in Nicaragua was the overwhelming majority at the time of the victory (July 19, 1979) (Sawchuk, 1997; Rushdie, 2008). The connection between liberation theologians and the revolution is also reflected in the introduction of changes to verses-and-responses during mass: “Between the Church and the Revolution/ There is no Contradiction” (Rushdie, 2008, p. 44).

After the victory over the Somoza regime, the government created state farms out of the previously ruling family's properties and those of its supporters. The changes introduced by the Sandinistas, particularly in rural areas, were substantial. The Sandinista government basically eliminated “class domination... and transformed the peasantry into a class of small farmers” (Dore & Weeks, 1992, p. 13). By the end of the 1980s, the control of land had changed in Nicaragua as a result of the Agrarian Reform Law of July 19, 1981. The Nicaraguan revolution initiated several cultural improvements and social developments. Undoubtedly, the most important one was the Nicaraguan Literacy Campaign (*Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetización*).

Along with teachers, both university and secondary school students volunteered as teachers throughout the country, significantly reducing the overall illiteracy rate from 50.3 percent to 12.9 percent between March and August 1980 (Hanemann, 2005). This early literacy campaign was followed by several others until 2000 (Arrien, 2006). Several other early reforms in education, health, and land reform earned international recognition and significantly improved the living conditions of many Nicaraguans (Rushdie, 2008).

The Sandinistas received a lot of support from foreign countries. An important attribute of the revolution was the concept of a “shared revolution”<sup>23</sup>, a concept developed by former vice president Sergio Ramirez and discussed in Ramirez (1999). Indeed, the revolution was “shared” worldwide with many supporters, mostly in Europe, but also in the United States and parts of Latin America. Daniel Ortega headed the revolutionary committee, leading the country until 1984. After the Sandinista’s victory, the first free elections were held in 1984. The Sandinista candidates won with 67 percent of the votes. Ortega was elected president in Nicaragua’s first democratic elections and served a term from 1985 to 1990.

Ortega’s first government was overshadowed by the fierce Contra War. Amidst the Cold War, the United States reacted strongly against the Sandinista government and started supporting the ‘Contras’ (short for ‘Contrarevolución’—Eng translation: counter-revolution). The ‘Contras’ were a coalition of counter-revolutionary groups, including Somoza’s National Guard. The strategy pursued by this group in the ‘Contra War’ was to commit terrorist attacks. While originally hopes were high that the condition of the population would change for the better with the takeover of the Sandinistas, some of these hopes saw themselves disappointed given the need to adjust budgets in light of the dreading conflict with the U.S.-backed Contras (Babb, 1996; Rushdie, 2008). Some of the Government’s original plans for social transformation were progressively undermined by the investments and efforts needed to resist the Contra aggressions. To end the war, the Sandinistas signed an accord with the Contras, calling for a ceasefire and elections to be held in February 1990, in which the Contras as well as the internal opposition would be allowed to participate (Burbach, 2009). The population was discouraged by the years of civil war and so, in 1990, a coalition of anti-Sandinista groups headed by Violeta Chamorro (widow of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro) won the elections. The following years were characterized by a move towards a market-based principles economy and by structural reforms. There was also a significant shift in gender policies under Chamorro. During her government, several care centers were closed, programs against domestic violence were eliminated, and school books were promoting Catholicism and traditional gender relations (Kampwirth, 2008).

In the 2006 election, Ortega publicly reconciled with Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, who had been a prominent figure of the counterrevolutionary movement in the 1980s. Ortega and Rosario Murillo announced their conversion to Catholicism and were married by the Cardinal (Burbach, 2009; Kampwirth, 2008). In addition, the vote in the National Assembly in October 2006 to

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<sup>23</sup> In the Spanish original: “revolución compartida”.

abolish the life-of-the-mother exception to abortion in the civil code was supported by the FSLN members of parliament. In light of this legal change, and as a response to Zoilamérica Narvaez' allegations that her stepfather Ortega had sexually abused her<sup>24</sup>, the women's movement<sup>25</sup> became increasingly alienated from the FSLN (Kampwirth, 2008). Several former revolutionary allies have since split from the FSLN, some of which have established Movimiento de Renovación Sandinista MRS, founded under former vice president Sergio Ramirez (Burbach, 2009).

Soon after the FSLN returned to power in 2006, critical social changes were reinitiated: educational matriculation fees were abolished and the Zero Hunger program established (Burbach, 2009). At the same time, critics have pointed to the connections of the government to the Catholic Church and the business sector. For instance, the NYT states in March 2009: "Whatever ideals Ortega may once have stood for, he now stands for only himself. He was first elected president of Nicaragua in 1984 and, after losing power in 1990, regained the presidency in 2006, this time not as a Marxist-Leninist, not even really as a leftist. His government now embraces business and the Catholic Church warmly."<sup>26</sup> Criticism of the government was also heard quite prominently when the Nicaraguan National Assembly approved changes to the Constitution, allowing President Ortega to run for a third successive term in 2016. Just prior to the November 2016 elections, Carlos F. Chamorro<sup>27</sup>, director of the independent newspaper *Confidencial*, described the current government as follows: "...an institutional dictatorship with an absolute level of concentration of power, based on an alliance with the large private entrepreneurs through a corporatist scheme, and thanks to assistencialist social policies towards the poor, which have provided him with an undeniable political advantage"(NYT, November 4 2016)<sup>28</sup>. In a manifesto, published in May 2016 ("We will not allow that a minority kidnaps the

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<sup>24</sup> See for instance: NYT (29 March 1998): Conversations: Zoilamérica Narvaez; A Victim of Sexual Abuse In a Prison of Political Ideals. Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/03/29/weekinreview/conversations-zoilamerica-narvaez-victim-sexual-abuse-prison-political-ideals.html>;

Washington Post (14 March 1998): Stepdaughter accuses Ortega of Abusing her. Retrieved from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1998/03/14/stepdaughter-accuses-ortega-of-abusing-her/>

<sup>25</sup> The women's movement is a key stakeholder in Nicaragua and very vocal in terms of promoting equal rights and opportunities for men and women. The movement experienced significant growth in outreach and importance during the Sandinista revolution (USAID, 2012). Women's organizations not only have played a key role in promoting women's rights and gender equality, lobbying the government to pass relevant laws and policies. They have also directly delivered services like health care and legal services into small communities and remote rural areas (USAID, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Access online at NYT (20 March 2009): <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/22/magazine/22Nicaragua-t.html>

<sup>27</sup> Currently director of the independent newspaper *Confidencial* and son of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, editor of the government critical newspaper *La Prensa* under Somoza who was shot (his family accused the Somoza regime for ordering the murder).

<sup>28</sup> Access online at NYT: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/05/opinion/in-nicaragua-a-blatantly-rigged-election.html>

Spanish language original: "...una dictadura institucional con un nivel absoluto de concentración del poder, sustentado en una alianza con los grandes empresarios privados a través de un esquema corporativista, y gracias a

Nation”)<sup>29,30</sup>, a group of 27 intellectuals, including former prominent leaders of the FSLN such as Ernesto Cardenal and Gioconda Belli, describe the Ortega government as an “authoritarian, excluding and corrupt” government.<sup>31</sup> Implicitly, they refer to the famous manifesto published in 1974, also signed by 27 intellectuals and criticizing the Somoza government<sup>32</sup>—the reason why La Prensa referred to the manifesto with the words: “history repeats itself.” As widely expected, FSLN won the 2016 elections with an overwhelming majority. This time, Ortega was running for office with his wife Rosario Murillo—referred to by many even prior to these elections as the most powerful person in the country—as candidate for Vice President.<sup>33</sup>

The Sandinista revolution had a significant and positive impact on social progress and women’s role in society specifically. Women’s active participation (both as political leaders and as combatants) has been broadly documented (for instance, in Molyneux, 1985). While more recent evolvments have been criticized by a number of different stakeholders, it remains a fact that the revolution opened ways for more progressive and egalitarian thinking. However, these broader changes were not accompanied by a corresponding consistent transformation in the culture of machismo in Nicaragua, by which men continue to dominate women's lives both in public and in private (Berglund et al., 1997). Lancaster (1994) analyzes culture and politics in the Nicaraguan revolution and argues that the revolution failed to address and transform the culture of machismo as well as the system of gender relations. Machismo continued to be reproduced despite the original objectives of the revolution to end it. The legal changes, eliminating discriminatory laws and increasing women’s public representation introduced during the revolution (Luciak, 1998) did not fully translate into individual relationships at the micro-level which, continued to oftentimes be oppressive according to Pérez Alemán (1990). Interestingly, several authors state that the Sandinistas did not necessarily promote a substitution of previous gender roles, but rather an “expansion of women’s duties to include both national life beyond the home and within the home itself” (Jenkins, 2008) as evidenced in the famous photograph of the ‘Miliciana de

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políticas sociales asistencialistas hacia los pobres, que le han brindado un innegable rédito político.” (NYT, November 3, 2016: Una farsa electoral). Access online at NYT (25 November 2016): <http://www.nytimes.com/es/2016/11/03/una-farsa-electoral-en-nicaragua/>

<sup>29</sup> Original title: “No Permitamos Que Una Minoría Secuestre A La Nación”

<sup>30</sup> Access online at La Prensa (15 December 2016): <http://cdn.laprensa.com.ni/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/05215737/Manifiesto-Grupo-de-los-27.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> <http://cdn.laprensa.com.ni/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/05215737/Manifiesto-Grupo-de-los-27.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> “No hay por quién votar” (Engl. translation: “There is no-one to vote for”), signed by P.J. Chamorro jointly with other 26 opposition leaders.

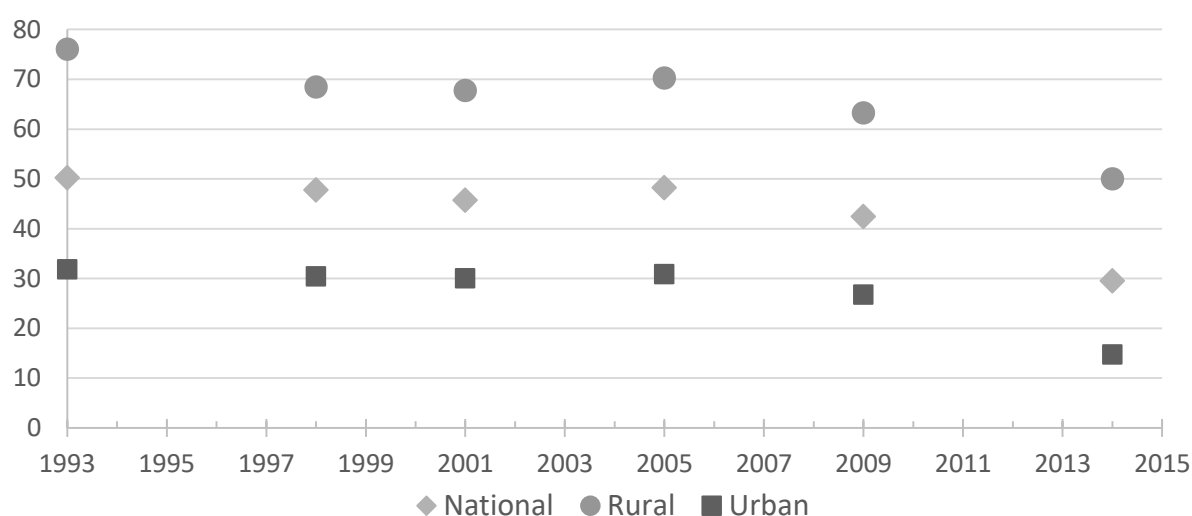
<sup>33</sup> To cite just a few examples: *Le monde diplomatique* (Sandra Weiss): “Nicaraguas ewiger Präsident” (<http://www.taz.de/15352580/>); *The Guardian*: “Nicaragua suppresses opposition to ensure one-party election – critiques say”, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/26/nicaragua-opposition-daniel-ortega-presidential-election>; NYT: “Nicaragua’s Electoral Farce”, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/08/opinion/nicaraguas-electoral-farce.html>; *The Economist*: Fourth Time Unlucky: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/08/opinion/nicaraguas-electoral-farce.html>

Waswalito<sup>34</sup> discussed in the Introduction . The image of the mother thus continued to be central and prominent during the Sandinista period, though the involvement in the armed struggle clearly represented a radical move from that traditional type of motherhood prevalent in Nicaragua before the revolution (Kampwirth, 1996).

### 3.2 Poverty and inequality<sup>35</sup>

Nicaragua has witnessed an impressive poverty reduction in the past ten years. According to the official poverty rate,<sup>36</sup> poverty (defined as life under the general poverty line, C\$ 17,011 in 2014)<sup>37</sup> stood at 29.6 percent in 2014, a significant and impressive decrease from 50.3 percent in 1993.

Figure 1: Official poverty rates in percent - urban vs. rural vs. national, Nicaragua (Source: LAC Equity Lab)



Poverty reductions were observed in both urban and rural areas, but poverty has been consistently much higher in rural areas (50.1 percent versus 14.8 percent for urban in 2014). Figure 2 showcases the poverty rates for Nicaragua (both extreme poverty and poverty) in comparison to regional averages. Contrary to the above mentioned official poverty line, the

<sup>34</sup> To see the photograph: <http://ahabbestad.blogspot.com/2011/05/miliciana-de-waswalito-by-orlando.html>

<sup>35</sup> Data under this section was retrieved at the World Bank's LAC Equity Lab if not otherwise mentioned.

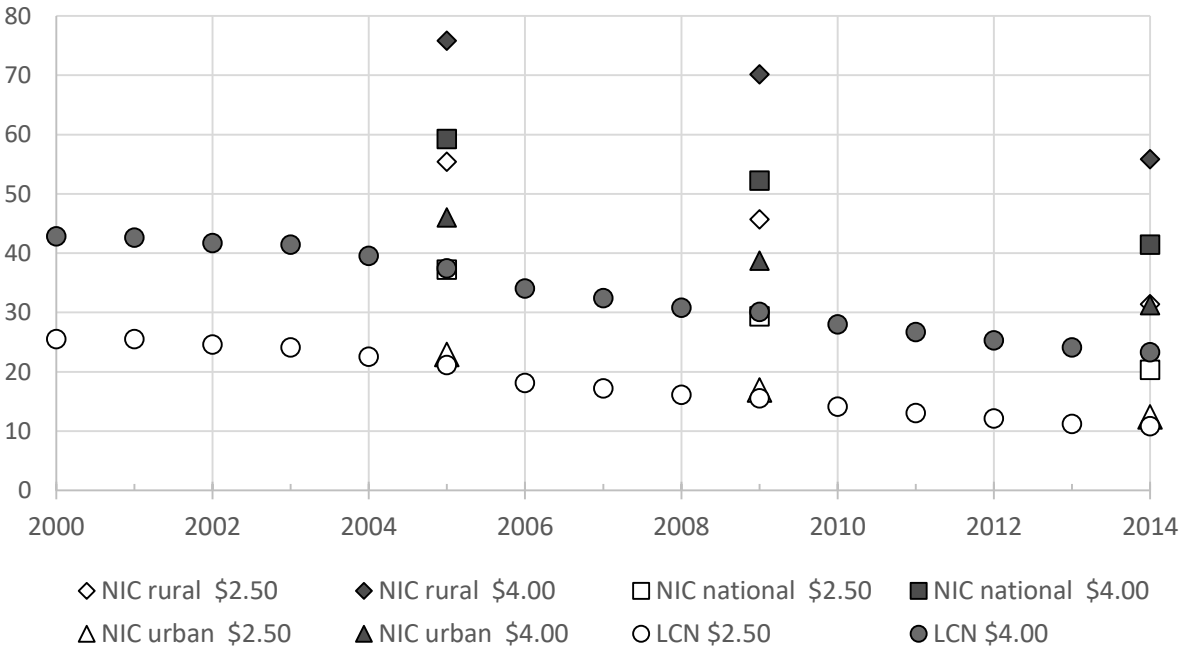
<sup>36</sup> Official extreme and overall poverty estimates in Nicaragua are produced by the National Statistical Institute (NSO) of the country (Instituto Nacional de Información de Desarrollo or INIDE) based on data from the Living Standards Measurement Studies (LSMS) surveys (Encuesta Nacional de Hogares sobre Medición de Nivel de Vida or EMNV) for 1998, 2001, 2005, 2009, and 2014. Nicaragua estimates poverty based on the Cost of Basic Needs method by determining an absolute extreme poverty line of C\$10,523 and an overall poverty line of C\$ 17,011 per person per year in 2014. This poverty line refers to the per capita consumption required to access a basket of goods and services needed to achieve adequate living conditions. The choice of poverty line depends on the use to which it will be put: thus, for international comparisons, the 2.5 and 4.0 USD/day standard is helpful but for targeting of programs etc. may not be appropriate nor reflect local realities adequately and will therefore vary from country to country. (see also Haughton and Khandker 2009). (Source: World Bank)

<sup>37</sup> 0.58 USD as of November 23, 2016.



following data are based on poverty lines of USD 2.5 a day for extreme poverty and USD 4.0 a day for poverty and computed based on the regional data harmonization effort under SEDLAC (see earlier description). Given that harmonization effort, numbers discussed here may be different from official income and consumption poverty statistics reported by governments (see above). According to these calculations, extreme poverty is about 10 percentage points higher in Nicaragua compared to the regional average (20.3 percent versus 10.8 percent for Latin America). The discrepancy is even larger when using the poverty line (4 USD a day): In Nicaragua two out of five people are poor (41.4 percent) compared to about one in four people in the region (23.3 percent) (2014). At the same time, as mentioned in the above paragraph, using official poverty data, poverty reduction has been impressive in the country over the past 10 years (down from 60 percent in 2005).

Figure 2: Poverty rates (2005 PPP) in Nicaragua (NIC) and Latin America (LAC) in percent (Source: LAC Equity Lab)

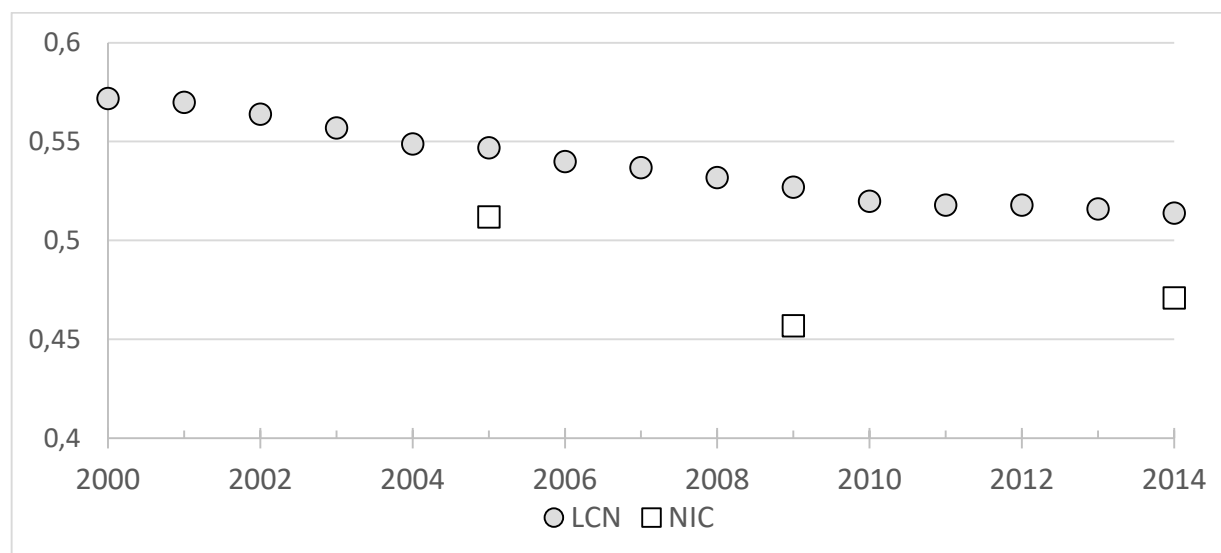


While this overall positive trend is noteworthy, Nicaragua remains one of the poorest countries in the region (after Haiti, Guatemala, and Honduras, data for 2014, using 4 USD poverty line). Particularly concerning are the ‘chronically poor’ (Vakis et al., 2016)—the people that are born into poverty and never escape their poverty status. The concept of chronic poverty involves a welfare and a time dimension. As Vakis et al. (2016) put it: “The chronic poor have not benefitted much from the impressive growth rates of the 2000’s and may have fallen through the cracks of the social assistance system; they have been left behind. Furthermore, the prospects of them escaping poverty in the near future are weak” (p. 1/2). According to the authors, Nicaragua has the second highest share of chronic poor in the region at 37 percent, with only Guatemala having a higher share (50 percent). Calculations put forward in the World Bank Poverty Assessment 2008 for Nicaragua showed that female-headed households were not poorer than male-headed

households. At the same time, the report highlights that households headed by someone under age 35 were 9–13 percent poorer than those headed by older adults. Furthermore, education levels were strongly and consistently associated with higher household consumption and thus, lower poverty status (World Bank, 2008). Both associations are of particular interest for this research. Finally, it is noteworthy that Nicaragua shows very high rates of childhood poverty (defined as the percentage of children below the age of 15 living on less than 4 USD per day). The poverty rate for children is 50.3 percent, which is significantly higher than per average in the region. Still, the decline from 69.7 percent in 2004 is comparable to the one on average observed for Latin America. In the region, there was a decrease in that rate from 53.8 percent in 2004 to 36.4 percent in 2014. On average, poverty rates remained higher among families with children, and children below age 15 continued to be one of the groups most disadvantaged in terms of poverty reduction (World Bank, 2016). Despite gains, children in Nicaragua have seen slower reductions in poverty than the overall population and continue to be more likely to live in poverty than adults.

Economically speaking, Nicaragua has traditionally been less unequal than Latin America and the Caribbean on average. The Gini coefficient<sup>38</sup> is still below the one observed for Latin America. While it showed a steep decline between 2005 and 2009, it slightly increased again from 2009 to 2014. At the same time, inequality in Nicaragua is high by international standards (World Bank, 2017).

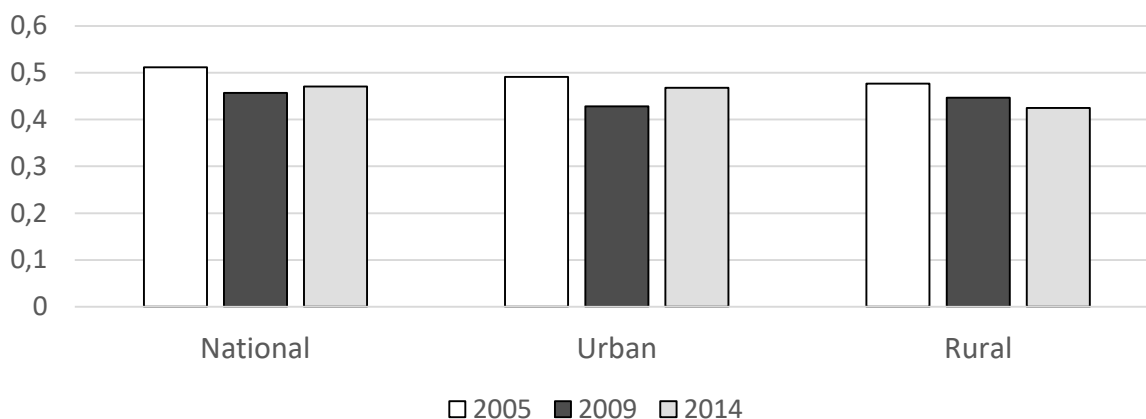
Figure 3: Inequality - Gini coefficient Nicaragua (NIC) and Latin America (LCN) (Source: LAC Equity Lab)



<sup>38</sup>“The most widely used single measure of inequality is the Gini coefficient. It is based on the Lorenz curve, a cumulative frequency curve that compares the distribution of a specific variable (for example, income) with the uniform distribution that represents equality.” (Haughton and Khandker, 2009, p. 104).

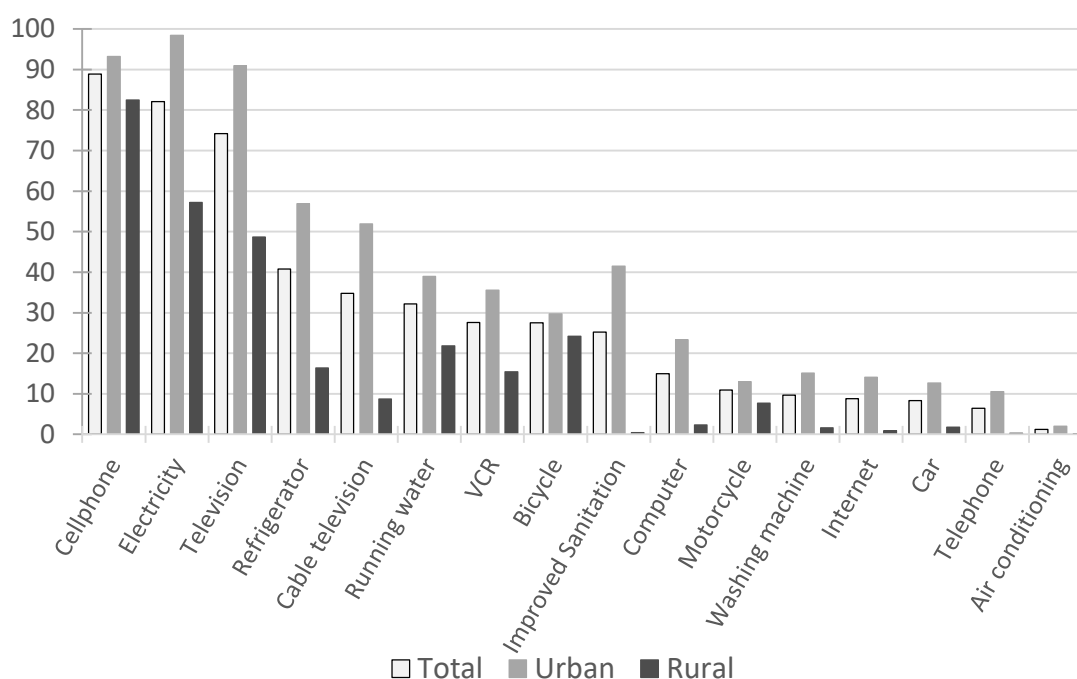
Inequality is slightly higher in urban areas if compared to rural. At the same time, it is interesting to observe that urban inequality increased over the past five years, while it further decreased in the rural areas during that period.

Figure 4: Gini coefficient rural versus urban and national, Nicaragua (Source: LAC Equity Lab)



In terms of access to housing and services, a strong discrepancy between rural and urban areas can be noted in Nicaragua. While differences in access to cellphones and vehicles (bicycles and motorcycles) are not that pronounced, they become notable when comparing access to electricity and equipment that use electricity (refrigerators, television, computer, internet, washing machine, VCR, and internet). Also, access to improved sanitation is almost nonexistent in rural areas, while 40 percent of the urban population benefit from it.

Figure 5: Share of the population with access to housing and services in percent, Nicaragua (data for 2014) (Source: World Development Indicators)



Summarizing, considerable declines in poverty can be observed lately in Nicaragua. At the same time, rural poverty remains very high. As also seen in the following chapters, rural and urban realities are very different from each other, with rural populations constantly being at a disadvantage in terms of opportunities and outcomes.

### 3.3 Women's agency in Nicaragua<sup>39</sup>

The concept of agency stands at the core of the human development and capability approach (see discussion in Chapter 5). According to the World Development Report 2012 on Gender Equality and Development: "By agency we mean an individual's (or group's) ability to make effective choices and to transform those choices into desired outcomes. Agency can be understood as the process through which women and men use their endowments and take advantage of economic opportunities to achieve desired outcomes. Thus, agency is key to understanding how gender outcomes emerge and why they are equal or unequal" (World Bank, 2012d, p. 150). The following pages will provide an overview of the condition of women's agency (and its manifestations) in Nicaragua, touching upon the legal situation, women's political representation and participation, violence against women, and the status of sexual and reproductive health of women in the country.

Legislation plays an important role in setting the context for women's agency to unfold effectively. At the same time, laws on paper are not enough to guarantee women's exercise of agency. Effective implementation of laws depend on the willingness of those in charge of implementation but also on the available budget and means to do so. Additionally, citizens must also be aware of their rights and have equal and fair access to justice. Nicaragua is a signatory to various International Conventions and instruments to promote women's rights, including the American Convention on Human Rights in 1979 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1980.<sup>40</sup> Nicaragua is also one of the 32 states that are signatory to the Belém do Pará Convention, an international human rights instrument concluded within the Organization of American States in 1994. The Convention calls for the establishment of mechanisms for protecting and defending women's rights and for combating violence against women.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Data under the following sections was retrieved from the WDI if not otherwise mentioned. This section also builds partially on a background note on gender issues in Nicaragua which I led. This note served as an (unpublished) background note for the Systematic Country Diagnostic Nicaragua (World Bank 2017).

<sup>40</sup> While Nicaragua was one of the first countries in Latin America to ratify CEDAW, the government refused to ratify its Optional Protocol (LACWHN, 2013). The Optional Protocol foresees that a State recognizes the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to receive and consider complaints from individuals or groups within its jurisdiction.

<sup>41</sup> The adoption and widespread ratification of the Convention of Belém do Pará in the middle of the 90s represents a landmark in the struggle to protect the rights of women, particularly because it received more ratifications than any other treaty on human rights in the hemisphere, and it is the first treaty in history that specifically covers the issue of violence against women (OAS, 2012).

The Nicaraguan legal framework is very advanced when it comes to legislation regarding gender equality. The Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua grants equal civil rights to all citizens and prohibits gender-based discrimination. Specifically, Article 27 mandates full equality of people before the law, and prevents discrimination on the basis of nationality, political beliefs, sex, language, religion, origin, economic position, social condition, or other causes. Several other laws mandate legal equality and address gaps directly. Furthermore, over the past years, Nicaragua has enacted a series of legislative changes increasing gender equality before the law, including improvements in accessing institutions, using property, getting a job, and protecting women from violence (Women, Business and the Law, 2016). Also, Nicaragua reformed its Family Code to give married men and women equal rights to be head of family and to choose the marital home. The new Family Code also makes separation of property the default regime and repeals the provisions that gave judges decision-making power about ownership of assets in case of disagreement between spouses. Therefore, when property is divided now, all separate property remains with its owner, and assets over which spouses disagree are now presumed to be jointly owned in equal shares. Finally, the minimum age of marriage for both boys and girls was raised from 14 to 16 years (with parental authorization, it is 18 for both girls and boys otherwise (Código de la Familia, Articles 54, 57(a) and 58(c)).

Law 648 of February 2008, also known as the Law on Equity of Rights and Opportunities, stipulates gender equality and grants equal rights and opportunities to both genders. In addition, there are no legal inequalities in terms of accessing institutions and property, and Nicaragua has laws mandating equal pay (WBL, 2016). A reform of the electoral law establishes proportional representation between women and men in decision-making positions in public administration. On May 15, 2012, Article 82 was incorporated into the Constitution, reforming the electoral law. Since then, political parties and alliances have been required to present 50 percent female candidates on ballots. The Law 786 (Reform of the Law of Municipalities) makes gender analysis mandatory for the approval of municipal projects (MDGF, 2013).

The Labor Code (Law 85/96) mandates that women may not be discriminated against in the workplace. Nicaraguan legislation also protects pregnant women from dangerous work and mandates employers to transfer pregnant employees to positions that would have no effect on their pregnancies. Employers also have to guarantee the positions of women who are pregnant or on maternity leave unless there is a valid reason related to their work (OECD, 2014). Women are entitled to 12 weeks of total paid maternity leave that pays 100 percent of their average earnings in the last four weeks before childbirth (60 percent of that amount are paid from national social security and 40 percent are contributed by the employer). Five days of paid paternity leave were introduced recently. It is worth noting that only those in formal employment can benefit from these regulations (OECD, 2014).

Importantly, Nicaragua recently passed new legislation to combat violence against women.<sup>42</sup> The Comprehensive Act against Violence towards Women (Law 779) and the reform of the Criminal Code (Act No. 641) were adopted and entered into force in 2012. They add and revise several articles from the Criminal Code. Ley 779, as it is often referred to in Nicaragua, covers sexual harassment, rape, and domestic violence and puts forward responsibilities for action for the government and public authorities to protect women from all forms of violence. The law aims to prevent and eradicate violence against women and mandates punishment for different types of violence, including physical or psychological harm to women of all ages. The law is comprehensive because beyond the punishment of the perpetrator, it also foresees several preventative measures and mandates the creation of a support network for victims of violence.<sup>43</sup> Through Law 779, femicide is classified as a criminal offense for the first time. The law refers to all cases of violent deaths of women within the framework of unequal power relations, including marriage and cohabitation (CEPAL, 2013). In severe cases, the law allows for prison sentences of up to 30 years for femicide (CCPCJ, 2014). The law also criminalizes spousal rape and all forms of rape, regardless of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Sentences for those convicted of rape range from eight to 12 years. In cases of ‘aggravated rape’ sentences will be around 15 years (USDS, 2016). The law had initially made mediation impossible in cases of violence. However, since 2013 revisions have been proposed in the National Assembly under heavy criticism from women’s rights groups. The latter suggest that the government is undermining victims’ protection through the introduction of the possibility to mediate in those cases. Women’s rights NGOs continued to protest the presidential decree on regulations for Law 779 regarding violence against women (USDS, 2016). In addition, women’s rights organizations have criticized the law for lack of substantial funding for implementation.

The state also has the obligation to provide young people with access to sexual education and protect and promote their reproductive rights. The country has implemented a national strategy on sexual and reproductive health and developed policies and legal frameworks on gender-based violence, sexuality education, and youth (UNFPA, 2013). In this regard, Law 392 (Ley para el Desarrollo Integral de la Juventud) is of crucial importance with regards to adolescent pregnancy. Youth ‘self-determination’ is one of the guiding principles of the law, defined as: “An undeniable principle of the full respect of young people to decide and act on their private life, as well as to influence and participate freely in any process that strengthens their integral development.”<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, it details the rights and obligations of youth under the law, including access to

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<sup>42</sup> As of 2014, 17 states in Latin America had adopted specific legislation on domestic violence including, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Venezuela (CCPCJ, 2014).

<sup>43</sup> This includes education programs working with men and boys to challenge social norms around violence. The law foresees the establishment of call centers, victim centers and public awareness-raising about domestic violence. The law includes the establishment of six courts specialized in violence in departments that have reported higher rates of violence against women.

<sup>44</sup> In the Spanish original: “un principio irrenunciable del respeto pleno de los jóvenes para decidir y actuar sobre su vida privada, sí como incidir y participar libremente en todo proceso que fortalezca su desarrollo integral.”

information and health and employment services. Similarly, in article 44 the Código de la Niñez y la Adolescencia of 1998, the government establishes that adolescents have a right to “complete, objective, orienting, scientific, gradual and formative sexual education” to develop their self-esteem and the respect towards their body and to promote responsible sexuality. According to that same Code, the government is responsible to guarantee sexual education programs through community or school services (UNFPA, 2014).

It is worthwhile to mention though that some of these previously mentioned progressive laws establish gender equality on paper, but are often much harder to implement. They are limited by a lack of resources and persisting social norms, as confirmed by key informants. This is particularly true for the implementation of legislation at the municipality level. Even if the necessary funds were available, the responsible entities on the municipal level often lack the capacity to effectively implement laws on gender equality and particularly, on gender-based violence (USAID, 2012). Furthermore, women face social stigma and fear of retaliation and hence often refrain from reporting abuse (USDS, 2016)<sup>45</sup>.

The country has one of the strictest anti-abortion legislation globally. Nicaragua is one of the few countries in the region that prohibit abortions under all circumstances. Under Articles 143 and 145 of the revised Penal Code, abortion is illegal in any occasion – including in cases of rape, incest, or when the mother’s life is endangered. Persons who are involved in or who assist in abortions are to be imprisoned according to the penal code. Women who seek an abortion can be charged with up to two years in jail<sup>46</sup>. In October 2006, days before the presidential election, unanimous votes of FSLN delegates were critical to secure the abolition of what Nicaraguans refer to as ‘therapeutic abortion’, that is, legal abortion under very limited circumstances, especially to save the life of the pregnant woman. Without those votes, the exception to be able to save the life of the woman, a reform that dated to the late nineteenth century liberal revolution of José Santos Zelaya, would not have been overturned (Kampwirth, 2008; Lateinamerika Nachrichten, 2009). This law has earned strong criticism by women’s and human rights activists.<sup>47</sup> Prior to that, abortion had been legal if required from a medical point of view. Amnesty International found that the new anti-abortion law disproportionately affects women under 17 years of age, since they make up a large portion of rape cases (OECD, 2014). Regulations banning abortion in all cases can put women’s lives at risk, and in addition, it may deter them from seeking medical attention for post-abortion obstetric emergencies (USDS, 2016). Legalizing abortion can save women’s lives by reducing the health risks of unsafe abortions. Furthermore, legal access to

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<sup>45</sup> Key informants interviewed for this study (representatives from the women’s movement, academics and representatives from youth NGOs) emphasized the lack of implementation of many legal efforts that have been put in place to promote gender equality.

<sup>46</sup> See for instance USAID (2012) on the important role of the Catholic Church in the adoption of this penal code.

<sup>47</sup> Human Rights Watch (“Over Their Dead Bodies”) suggested in 2007 that this law denies women access to health services that can be essential to saving their lives. Following that, it is inconsistent with Nicaragua’s obligations to ensure women’s right to life under international human rights law according to the same report.

abortion consists of a broadening of women's options in the case of an unintended pregnancy. For instance, the legalization of abortion in Bangladesh, Romania, and South Africa led to measurable declines in abortion-related mortality (Benson et al., 2011). In South Africa, the annual number of abortion related deaths fell by 91 percent after liberalization of the abortion law (Jewkes et al., 2005).

The legal age of marriage is 18 for women and men, but with the consent of a parent, young men and women can marry at 16 (Código de Familia, Articles 54, 57(a) and 58(c), see also Women, Business and the Law database 2018). Importantly though, the Código de la Familia also establishes the emancipatory character of early motherhood: According to Art. 534 and 536, a minor will become able to administer goods and his/her own person when turning 18 years old. But Art. 20 recognizes the legal capacity of a single mother below age 18 (and older than 16), emphasizing the emancipatory character of motherhood (Fondo Equidad de Género, 2012). Furthermore, the same Family Code establishes that if a minor woman marries an adult man, that man has the legal representation of any joint children and the right to administer the couple's goods. Nicaragua, together with the Dominican Republic and Cuba, has the highest child marriage rate in Latin America (Klugman et al., 2014, based on DHS data). Summarizing, despite progress, somewhat contradicting logics have been driving recent politics and legal changes.

In inclusive societies, the political representation should reflect the composition of the given population to ensure all voices are heard and the perception of government's legitimacy is enhanced. With regard to women's political participation in particular, certain policy issues may be discussed, prioritized, and proposed if women are represented to a larger share in the different political settings. At the same time, social norms often assign men to the public sphere, and 'leadership,' especially in the political spheres, is associated with men in many contexts. In terms of political participation of women, Nicaragua stands out in the region. Nicaragua is the first Latin American country ever to elect a woman as president by popular vote,<sup>48</sup> and women are deeply involved in politics at all levels and to a much higher degree than in most countries in the region. Currently, the National Assembly is composed of 41.3 percent of female parliamentarians, compared to the regional average of only 28.2 percent (2015). It is important to note, however, that this large increase is solely owed to one party's commitment to gender equality. The Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, FSLN, had previously incorporated quotas in the party's statute<sup>49</sup> (UE, 2011). The vast majority of the elected female representatives are members of FSLN. In addition, Nicaragua has the highest number of women holding ministerial positions in its history (57 percent in 2014 and 47 percent in 2016) which is at the same time the highest share

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<sup>48</sup> Violeta Barrios de Chamorro was elected in 1990 (CEPAL, 2013).

<sup>49</sup> Only the FSLN set a specific quota in its statutes, which set a minimum of 30 percent of women in the management bodies and candidate lists. The statutes of the PLC (Partido Liberal Constitucionalista) set a quota of 40 percent for women and young people, without specifying the division between the two categories (EU, 2011).



of female Ministers in the region<sup>50</sup> (CEPAL, 2013). At the local level, Nicaraguan women's leadership in politics also becomes visible. Compared to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the share of women among mayors is much higher. Nicaragua is the only country in the region with more than 30 percent of elected female mayors. Currently, 40.1 percent of mayors are female after a surge of over 30 percentage points between 1998 and 2013 (UN, 2015). This can likely be attributed to the reform of the Municipalities Act and of Act No. 790 reforming the Elections Act No. 331. According to the same Act, candidate lists of political parties and electoral alliances must be 50 percent men and 50 percent women. Moreover, they must be evenly distributed and alternately ranked for positions of mayor, deputy mayor, councilors, and deputies (UN, 2014).

These are noteworthy trends, as there is growing evidence on the benefits of female political representation. Klugman et al. (2014) summarize evidence from Jones (2005), UNICEF (2006), IDEA (2005), Hallward-Driemeier et al. (2013) to show that policy making increasingly reflects the priorities of families and women once female representation increases and discriminating legislation tends to get abolished. On the other hand, female political participation does not necessarily translate into more favorable outcomes for women. Thus, having more women in public office may be a necessary condition to improve overall female agency and voice in a country, but it may not be sufficient.

Finally, another stark manifestation of the lack of women's agency is their exposure to violence, and specifically to intimate partner violence. Violence against women is a negation of women's basic human rights and it represents one of the starkest erosions of women's agency. At the same time, it is a very common challenge all around the world. Compared to its neighbors in the Central American region, Nicaragua continues to be a comparatively safe country. In its Human Development Report for Latin America and the Caribbean 2013–2014 on public safety, UNDP notes that Nicaragua has a homicide rate of 9.6 per 100,000 inhabitants (UN, 2014), the second lowest homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants in Central America (only after Costa Rica). The male homicide rate significantly exceeds the female homicide rate. In 2011, 92.6 percent of homicide victims in Nicaragua were male (UNODC, 2013). In Nicaragua, just as in other countries, the urban and rural homicide rates differ. The rate registered for Managua exceeds that for the rest of the country; however, the difference between urban and rural is far more noticeable in other countries (UNODC, 2013). Worldwide, women tend to suffer more violence from an intimate partner and within the private sphere, while men tend to suffer significantly more violence in the public space, including more deadly violence. These patterns also hold true for Nicaragua. Violence against women is deeply embedded in social and cultural gender norms, and it continues to be a serious concern in Nicaragua. As mentioned in the introduction section, in Nicaragua, women and men tend to be socialized along the binary concept of machismo and

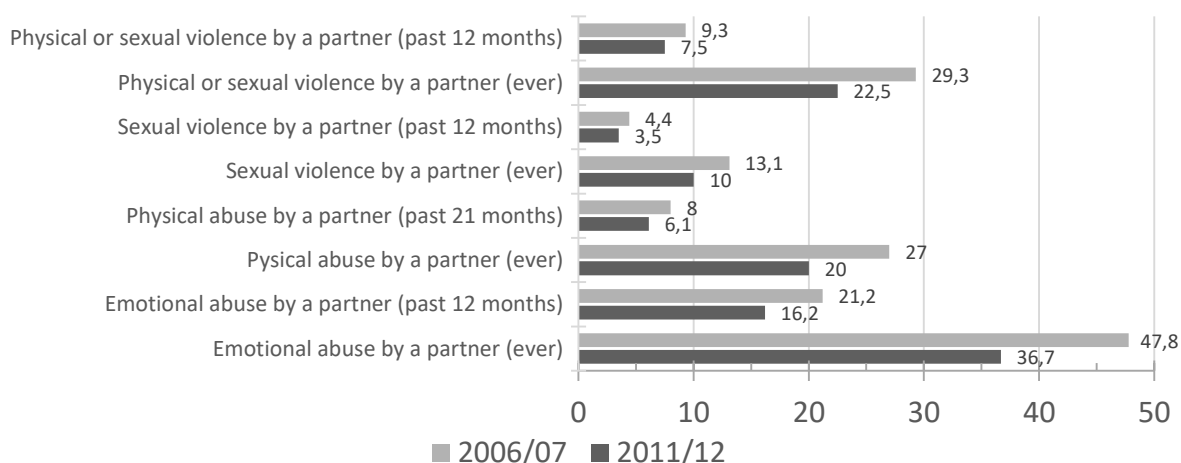
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<sup>50</sup> The other countries in the region with significant presence of women in ministerial cabinets were: Plurinational State of Bolivia, with 39.1 percent Ecuador, with 38.6 percent; Costa Rica, with 35.7 percent; and Colombia, with 30.8 percent after the 2011 election cycles (CEPAL, 2013).

marianismo, which to some extent is common all over Latin America (Ellsberg et al., 2000; Rivera, 1996). Machismo emphasizes the superiority of men over women, valuing “male aggressiveness and sexual prowess” (Ellsberg et al., 2000, p. 1606), while ‘marianismo’ emphasizes the attributes of Virgin Mary as qualities in women (maternity, purity).

In Nicaragua, gender-based violence is an issue of serious concern. Specifically, 22.5 percent of Nicaraguan women have experienced either physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives (ENDESA, 2012). In addition to physical and sexual violence, emotional abuse and controlling behaviors by a partner or former partner are also widespread. The behaviors included as emotional abuse include verbal abuse, humiliation, intimidation, and threats of harm. The proportion of women who had a partner and reported suffering this type of abuse “ever” was 36.7 percent. During the 12 months preceding the survey, 16.2 percent of women report to have been abused verbally, 6.1 percent physically and 3.5 percent sexually (Bott et al., 2012)<sup>51</sup>. These figures show a slight reduction from the 2007 survey. Back then 21.2 percent of women report to have been abused verbally, 8.0 percent physically, and 4.4 percent sexually (Bott et al., 2012).

Figure 6: Percentage of women (among women ever married or in union aged 15–49) who reported violence, Nicaragua (Source: Bott et al., 2012)



Younger age at first union (age <19) is associated with significantly greater odds of physical or sexual intimate partner violence, a very important finding in the context of this research. This association was found for all Latin American countries with comparable data except for Bolivia (2003) (Bott et al., 2012). It also holds true for Nicaragua.

Table 2: Prevalence rates violence by age at first marriage, Nicaragua (Source: Bott et al., 2012)

Age at first marriage or union	<15 years	15-19 years	20-24 years	25+ years
Percentage of women who reported physical or sexual violence by a partner ever, by age at first	39	29	24	19

<sup>51</sup> Note that Bott et al. (2012) uses ENDESA 2012 data throughout.

marriage or union, among women ever married  
or in union aged 15-49

Furthermore, out of all countries in Latin America with comparable data, Nicaragua was the only one in which employment was significantly associated with lower odds of partner violence both ever and in the past 12 months (Bott et al., 2012). Besides employment, increased educational achievement was also associated with less exposure to violence. Women with up to three years of education were about 1.5 times as likely to have ever suffered physical or sexual violence from a partner compared to women with 12 years of education (see Table 3).

Table 3: Prevalence rates violence by years of education achieved, Nicaragua (Source: Bott et al 2012)

Years of education	0-3	4-6	7-11	12+
Percentage of women who reported physical or sexual violence by a partner in the past 12 months, by women's background characteristics, among women ever married or in union aged 15-49	10.1	9.6	9.6	5.9

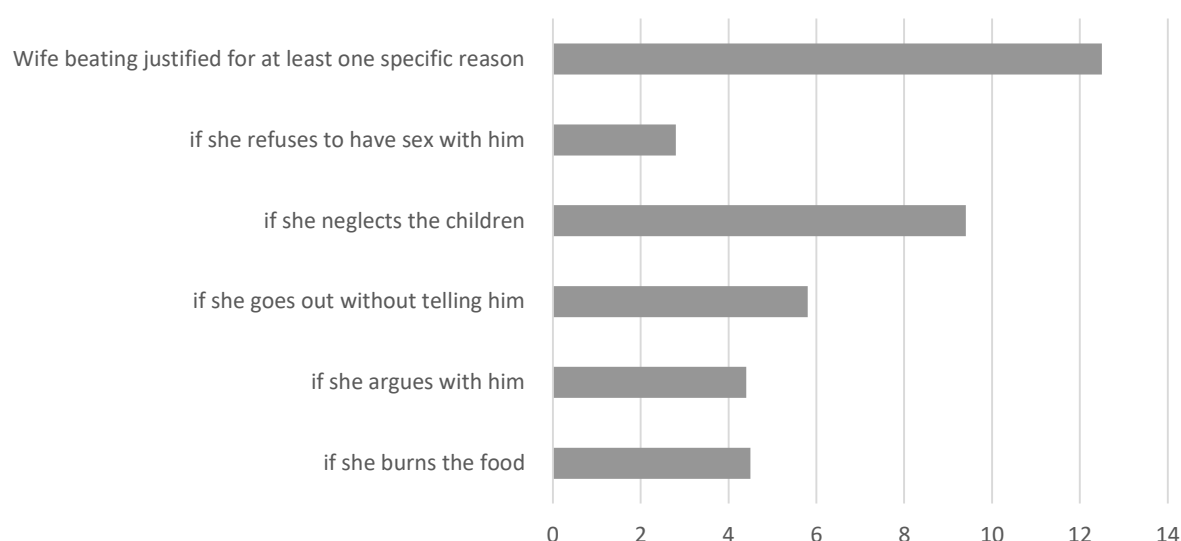
Finally, income quintile is associated with the prevalence of intimate partner violence in a reversed U-shape form with rates being highest amongst the third income quintile (see Table 4).

Table 4: Prevalence rates violence by income level, Nicaragua (Source: Bott et al., 2012)

Income quintile	Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest
Percentage of women who reported physical or sexual violence by a partner in the past 12 months, by women's background characteristics, among women ever married or in union aged 15-49	8.4	9.8	11.1	10.3	6.9

Suffering from intimate partner violence also seems to be correlated with low levels of control over one's fertility. The percentage of women who reported an unintended pregnancy resulting in a live birth in the past five years was significantly higher among women who had reported partner violence ever (48.2 percent) compared to those who had reported no partner violence (35.7 percent). Similarly, 21.2 percent of women who had reported partner violence (ever) reported an unwanted pregnancy resulting in a live birth in the past five years, compared to 12.1 percent of those women who had reported no partner violence. Social norms, particularly those that refer to women's role in society both in the public and the private sphere, tend to be decisive in determining the challenges and opportunities women face in that society. Thus, with regard to domestic violence, it is concerning that 12.5 percent of interviewed women believe that wife-beating is justified for at least one reason (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Share of female respondents who said wife beating is justified in percent, DHS data for 2001, Nicaragua (Source: DHS Statcompiler)



An earlier study on violence against women in Nicaragua (Ellsberg et al., 2000) finds positive associations between partner abuse and problems among children, including physical abuse—a topic that is particularly relevant for this research. Nearly half of abused women reported that their children were usually present during the violence. Furthermore, the authors argue that the children of women who had been abused were almost seven times more likely to be abused themselves (either physically, emotionally, or sexually). In addition, children of abused mothers were also twice as likely to suffer from learning impairments and behavioural problems if compared to children of women who had not been exposed to violence.<sup>52</sup>

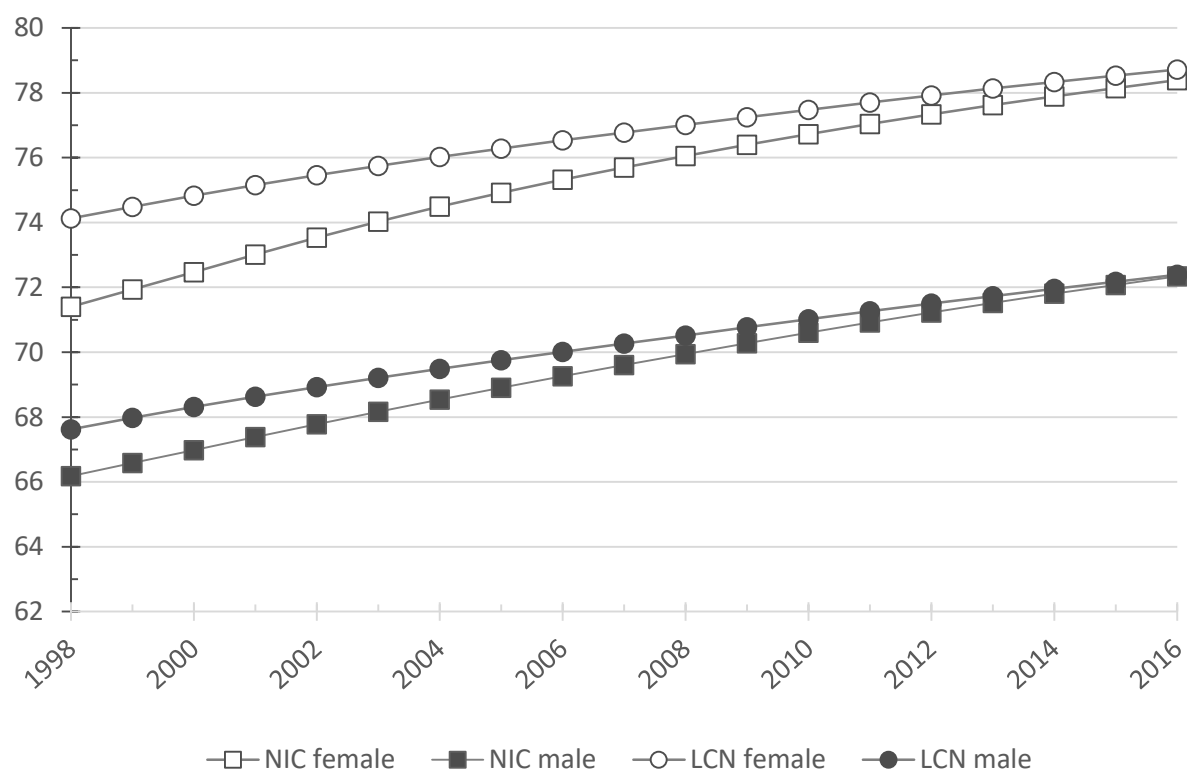
In line with our own findings put forth later on, Ellsberg et al. (2000) also find that women exposed to violence frequently experience feelings of shame and isolation. Both the qualitative interviews and the survey data indicated that women victims of domestic violence have less access to social support compared to those that do not suffer violence. This is consistent with the literature on violence against women, which shows that women victims of domestic violence have significantly less interaction with friends, neighbors, and relatives (Nielsen, Russell, & Ellington, 1992; Cazenave & Straus, 1979). Similarly, Heise (1998) suggests that the social isolation of women and families is both a cause and a consequence of wife abuse. Exposure to violence has severe human development costs—for the abused women and for their children (Perova, Reynolds, & Muller, 2013, for a literature review). These costs include negative consequences on their health such as anemia (Morrison & Orlando, 2004), malnutrition

<sup>52</sup> Besides that, the study finds that 52 percent of ever married women reported having experienced physical partner abuse at some point in their lives. Importantly, a considerable overlap was found between physical, emotional and sexual violence, with 21 percent of ever-married women reporting all three kinds of abuse. This study also gives some more detailed insights on the subject if compared to analysis that is possible to do on DHS data. For instance, the latency period between the initiation of marriage or cohabitation and violence was short, with over 50 percent of the battered women reporting that the first act of violence took place within the first two years of marriage.

(Ackerson & Subramanian, 2008), and STDs (Morrison & Orlando, 2004). There is also abundant evidence on the negative effects of domestic violence on children of the victims. These effects include direct harm (through injuries suffered by the mother during pregnancy) or elevated stress levels, pre-term birth, and low birth weight (Perova, Reynolds, & Muller, 2013). Children's exposure to violence also has negative psychological and behavioral consequences. Finally, mothers exposed to violence may not be able to provide adequate care for their children (Holt et al., 2008).

Lastly, this section will give a brief description of sexual and reproductive health status of women in Nicaragua. When it comes to health, life expectancy is usually a valid proxy indicator to indicate the overall health conditions of a certain population. In Nicaragua, significant gains in life expectancy at birth have been achieved: it increased from 73.5 for females and 67.8 for males in 2002 to 78.4 and 72.3 in 2016 respectively. In this period, Nicaragua has caught up with average regional figures (the average life expectancy for women in Latin America is 78.7 and for men, it is 72.4 in 2016).

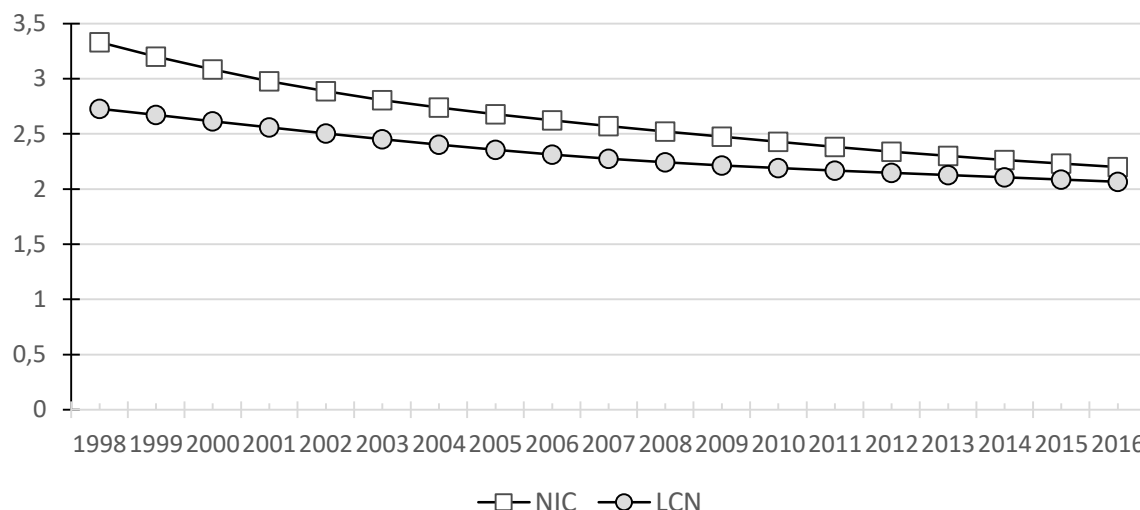
Figure 8: Life expectancy at birth in years, Nicaragua (NIC) and Latin America (LCN) by sex. (Source: World Development Indicators)



The total fertility rate has been declining in Nicaragua from 2.6 in 2007 to 2.2 in 2016 (WDI). It is still higher than the Latin America average rate, but aligning more closely to it as the following graph shows. At the same time, wanted fertility has also dropped from 2.5 in 1998 to 2.3 in 2007 (latest available data) meaning it stood at the level of the actual fertility rate at that time. But it

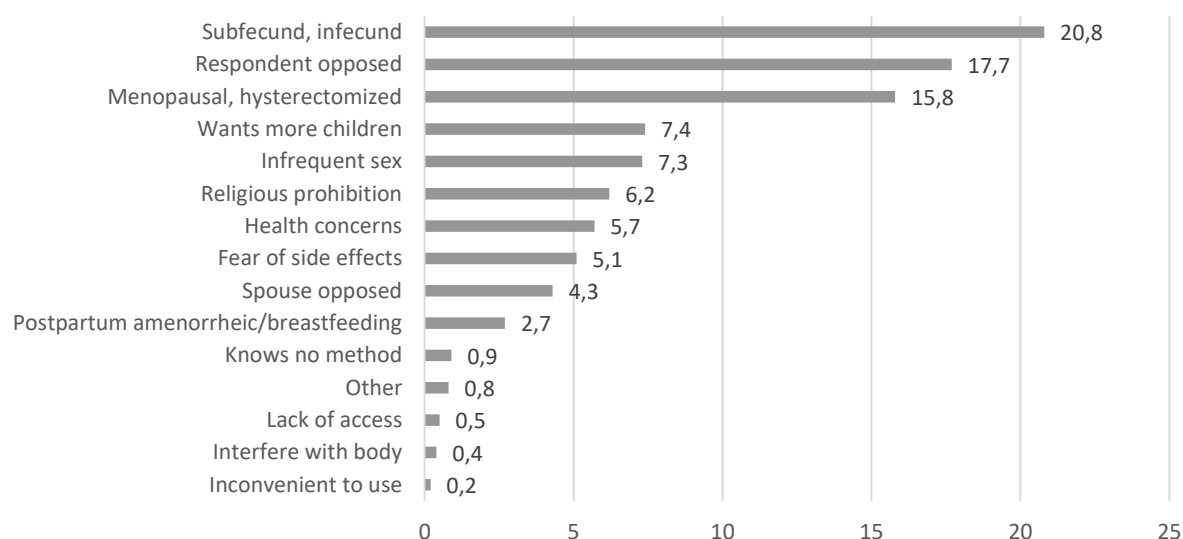
continues above the ones in its neighboring countries Honduras (2.2 in 2012) and El Salvador (2.0 in 2008).

Figure 9: Fertility rate, total (births per woman), Nicaragua (NIC) and Latin America (LCN) (Source: World Development Indicators)



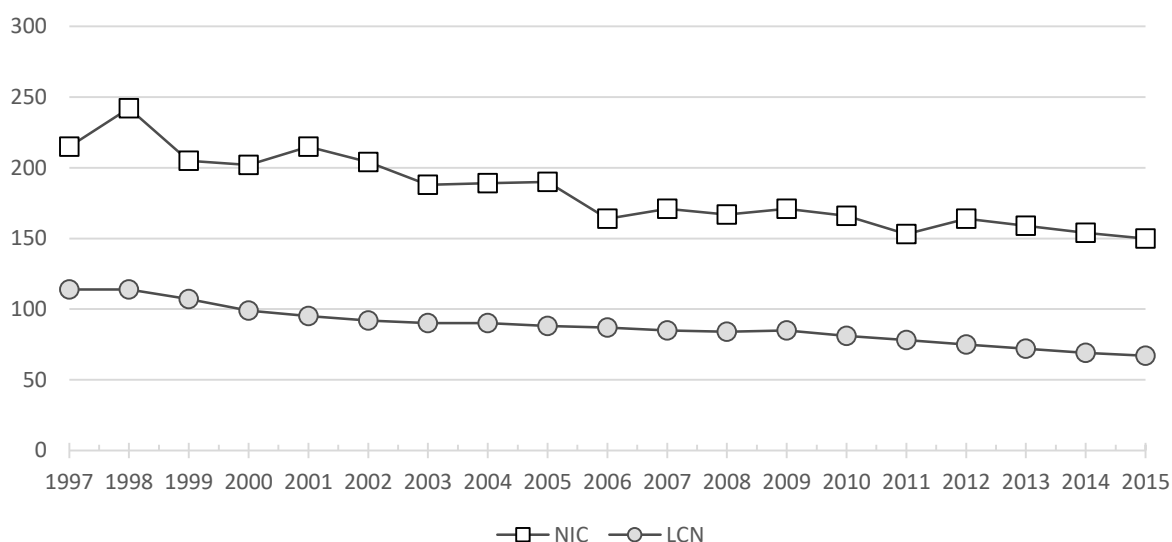
Relatedly, there has been a noticeable increase in the use of contraceptives. Whereas in 1998 only 60.3 percent of women were using some method of contraception, 80.4 percent of women were doing so in 2012. The share of women using modern contraceptive methods rose from 69.8 percent to 77.3 percent during the same period. Interestingly, the main reason for not using contraception seems less related to a lack of access or knowledge (latest data available is from 2001), but to personal motivation, such as feeling opposed to it, the desire for more children, or religious prohibitions.

Figure 10: Share of respondents quoting reason for not using contraception, in percent (data for 2001), Nicaragua (Source: DHS Statcompiler)



The maternal mortality ratio is probably the most often cited indicator when it comes to sexual and reproductive health. In Nicaragua, significant progress has been achieved in reducing the high levels of maternal mortality but the country still demonstrates a ratio estimated to be more than double that of the region as a whole in 2015: 150 deaths per 100,000 live births compared to regional average of 67. Additionally, these average rates cover the large variation in maternal mortality within the country. Generally, poor rural women are more likely to be affected by maternal deaths in comparison to their urban counterparts (USDS, 2016). According to UNFPA (2013), the Caribbean coast and the center-north regions of the country accounted for more than half (52.2 percent) of all maternal deaths in the last ten years. Adolescents accounted for 22 percent of maternal deaths in 2010 (UNFPA, 2013). The following graph shows that the very high rates of maternal deaths in Nicaragua, while constantly falling, are not necessarily adjusting to regional average rates, but instead, they are staying way above those.

Figure 11: Maternal mortality ratio (modeled estimate, per 100,000 live births), Nicaragua (NIC) and Latin America (LCN) (Source: World Development Indicators)



Similarly, other indicators are indicative of improvements in access to health care services for pregnant women over the past years. In 2012, 88 percent of women were attended by skilled health staff when giving birth, up from 64.6 percent in 2007 (ENDESA, 2012). This national average is below the regional average of 93.4 though. In 2012, 94.7 percent of pregnant women have received some form of prenatal medical attention, a significantly higher share than in 1998 (81.5 percent, ENDESA, 2012). Important policy steps have been taken to broaden and improve access to maternal health services in the last decade. The government increased the number of health facilities from 116 to 143 and that of maternity facilities (Casas Maternas) from 12 to 25 between 2006 and 2013 (UN, 2014). The number of medical staff (doctors, health workers, and community health workers) was also raised (UN, 2014). Casas Maternas have become an important strategy for reducing maternal and perinatal mortality. They serve as temporary shelters for women with high-risk pregnancies, mainly in the poorest areas of the country where women have more limited access to health services and education. Community volunteers identify

pregnant women in remote areas and bring them an array of services, including pre-natal checkups, birthing plans, and post-natal follow-up. Around the time of delivery, the women stay in the Casas Maternas, usually located near health units, and medical professionals attend to them while they wait for their delivery. After delivery, they can stay to recover before returning to their communities and receive additional support, such as help with breastfeeding, early parenting skills, and family planning. The focus of the services was criticized to be overwhelmingly medical (Quintana Ma, 2012).

Summarizing, the overall picture when analyzing women's agency in Nicaragua is perplexing. On the one hand, a system of quota and deliberate regulations ensured a steady increase in women's political representation. On the other hand, women in Nicaragua do not fully enjoy their sexual and reproductive rights and most indicators show worse performance compared to other countries in the region. Furthermore, violence against women—a problem embedded deeply in social norms—is a very prevalent and a serious concern in the country.

### 3.4 Beyond educational attainment: persisting challenges in quality of education

Education has traditionally been considered a means to promote social change. Education aims to form conscious citizens on the one hand. On the other hand, it should provide individuals with the skills needed to improve their own lives (Arnove, 1994). In revolutionary societies, education has been specifically valued for these attributes and potentials (Mueller, 2007). For Paulo Freire, education is a tool for personal liberation, particularly for the 'oppressed' (and with a particular focus on the Latin American context) (Freire, 1990). Through access to education (of good quality), people can become agents in their own lives. Such thinking was definitely behind the several literacy campaigns, implemented by the Sandinista government soon after they took office, from which primarily women and rural populations benefited (Mueller, 2007). Education also furthers the process of personal emancipation, which may be particularly relevant for women.

The importance of educating women has been broadly documented in the literature. Girls' and women's education was identified as 'the most urgent priority' in the World Declaration on Education for All in 1990 (UNESCO, 1997). Besides the instrumental effects of women's and girls' education for society and development, the importance of women's education in and of itself has also been highlighted in several International Conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990, and the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. At the 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), women's education was emphasized as key to improving women's participation in decision-making in society. The empirical literature has shown that women's education increases their own well-



being as well as the well-being of their children and the societies they live in (Vaughan, 2010). First, women's increased education translates into significant benefits in other dimensions of women's lives. Importantly, education leads to an increase in skills and capacities. Kabeer (2005) shows that there is considerable evidence for the claim that access to education can bring about changes in cognitive ability. Women's capacity to access knowledge and information, but even more so, to question and critically reflect on issues of their concern is an extremely important asset and a necessary condition to initiate the actions needed to improve their own lives (see review in Jejeebhoy, 1995). Education also increases women's capacity to care for themselves. Kabeer (2005), for instance, shows that it is associated with a significant increase in access to contraception and antenatal care. Klugman et al. (2014) takes this argument further and lists a broad body of evidence showing that education is a key driver behind agency. Data from Demographic and Health Surveys for 54 countries (using latest data available from 2001–2012) shows that agency deprivations (such as lack of control over resources, child marriage, and condonation with wife beating) is strongly correlated with a lack of education. In concrete numbers: almost one in five rural women with a primary education experience all three deprivations compared with 1 in 100 urban women with a higher education (Klugman et al., 2014). This argument has been previously established by Kabeer (2005): better educated women are often better able to make and implement decisions and choices, she argues, even where gender norms are restrictive. As a concrete example, Klugman et al. (2014) show that 43 percent of women without an education have no say in decisions about visits to friends and family, compared with 17 percent of those with a higher education. In her discussion of MDG 3, Kabeer (2005) shows that better educated women scored higher than less educated women on a composite index measuring their access to, and control over, resources, as well as their role in economic decision-making. Overall, skills, knowledge, and enhanced self-esteem acquired in schooling may prepare women to better deal with the outside world, including institutions and service deliverers (Kabeer, 2005). Furthermore, the positive impacts from education on women's sexual and reproductive health has been well documented. Pena et al. (1999) clearly associate the decreasing trend in fertility rates in Nicaragua with the increase in women's education. Similarly, Kabeer (2005) refers to empirical evidence showing that women with more education are less likely to have to ask their husband's or family's permission to seek medical care and are at the same time more likely to marry later<sup>53</sup> and have fewer children (Levine et al., 2008; Kabeer, 2005). They also participate more in economic decisions in the home (Kabeer, 2005). Education and the acquirement of skills leads to better earnings. Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2002) argue that women receive higher returns to their schooling investments, particularly when it comes to secondary education, in which case their returns are even higher than the ones achieved by males (Chaaban & Cunningham, 2011). At the same time, one has to emphasize that the quality of schooling is extremely relevant for whether or not these other development objectives can be achieved through access to education. In addition, and also broadly documented, school practice

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<sup>53</sup> For example, across 18 of the 20 countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage, girls with no education were up to six times more likely to marry than girls who had received a secondary education (Klugman et al., 2014).

has the power to reinforce gender stereotypes, harming girls' self-esteem and reducing their aspirations.

Besides positive impacts on their own lives, women's increased education is beneficial to their children, in particular, to their health and educational achievements. In studies across the world, children's health has been found to be strongly correlated with mothers' schooling (Klasen, 2002; Levine et al., 2008; Bicego & Boerma, 1993; World Bank, 2012d). Children of better educated women have higher immunization rates (World Bank, 2012d), and they are less likely to be stunted (Klugman et al., 2014; Levine et al., 2008). More generally, mother's education proves to improve child nutrition, even when controlling for other factors linked to better nutrition, such as household income, mother's height, breastfeeding practices, water, and sanitation. Levine et al. (2008) cite a number of studies that show links between women's school attainment and reductions in child death rates (Diamond, Newby, & Varle, 1999; see also World Bank, 2012d) and between women's years of schooling and infant mortality. Schultz (1993) also conclude in a large cross-country study that for every year of schooling, infant mortality declines by 5–10 percent. Apparently, mothers' secondary schooling is particularly powerful when determining improved health of their children (Levine et al., 2008; Subbarao & Rainey, 1995). Additionally, mothers' school attainment is closely correlated with an increased school attainment of their children (World Bank, 2012d; Klasen, 2002). Levine et al. (2008) cite several studies that show these effects. For instance, Filmer (1999), based on data from 41 countries, shows that schooling of adults in the household significantly affected the enrollment of children in all countries. Importantly, mothers' schooling had a larger effect than that of the fathers. In Latin America, that relationship seems to hold as well. IADB (1998) finds that 15-year-olds whose mothers have some secondary schooling remain in school for two to three years more than the children of mothers with less than four years of schooling (IADB, 1998). This relationship between mothers' and children's schooling may be furthered because women with more education may have more resources to be able to send their children to school. Also, having studied themselves, they may attribute more value to education themselves. In addition, they may be able to help their children better as they progress in the education system, supporting homework and learning. Finally, children of educated mothers are exposed to a different role model compared to those with mothers without education.

Finally, increasing women's education also brings substantive benefits for societies in general. Female education has been described by some as the means to achieve development and 'modernity' (King & Hill, 1993). Gender inequality in education affects long-term economic growth, even controlling for eventual endogeneities (Klasen, 2002). Klasen (2002) argues that gender inequality in education lowers the average level of human capital and can have indirect effects on economic growth. Concretely, Klasen estimates that 0.4–0.9 percentage points of differences in annual per capita growth rates between world regions can be accounted for by differences in gender gaps in education between these regions. Furthermore, Levine et al. (2008) show that girls' education shapes the skills and capacities and thus, competitiveness of a country's

labor force. Similarly, these authors argue that a decrease in fertility caused by increased female secondary education will lead to a lower dependency ratio (per worker) and thus, positive conditions for economic growth.<sup>54</sup> Finally, Levine et al. (2008) also emphasize that besides productive and skilled workers, societies will also benefit from informed and engaged citizens. In addition, societies who will lack to invest in girls will pay a price for it in terms of slower growth and reduced income according to Dollar and Gatti (1999). Importantly, these authors show that gender inequality in education seems to be explained to a large extent by religious preferences. As the authors put it: “...the fact that religion variables systematically explain differences in gender inequality suggests that some societies have a preference for inequality and are willing to pay a price for it. (It would perhaps be more accurate to say that those who control resources in the society have a preference for gender inequality that they are willing to pay for.)” (p. 3).

The Sustainable Development Goals also put significant emphasis to women’s education. Goal 4 (“Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning”) explicitly mentions girls, boys, women, and men under its targets. It also includes one specific target that reads as follows: “By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.” Furthermore, gender equality is explicitly listed as content to be acquired by all learners. Finally, the targets also refer to the need for education facilities to be constructed in a gender sensitive way (UN, 2016). Education is important though for both boys and girls. A growing body of evidence indicates that higher levels of educational attainment generally produce a number of nonpecuniary benefits, including happiness and better health, critical thinking and social skills, better marriage prospects, and better parenting skills (Oreopoulos & Salvanes, 2011). Increased education attainment and quality of education also has a positive effect on reducing crime (Chioda, 2017). Poverty is generally highly associated to lower education outcomes. Vakis et al. (2016) find that the chronic poor in Latin America (those households who remained poor between 2004 and 2012) had on average three years of education less than those households who escaped poverty between both years. In Central America, parental education severely influences children’s schooling outcomes, indicating low schooling mobility—lower compared to the Latin American average (computed for the years 2000, 2005 and 2012 by Adelman et al., 2016). Importantly, Nicaragua (together with Honduras) has the lowest schooling mobility in the sub region (Adelman et al., 2016).

In Nicaragua, the official primary school entrance age is 6. The system is structured so that the primary school cycle lasts 6 years, lower secondary lasts 3 years, and upper secondary lasts 2 years (EPDC, 2014). Education is compulsory from ages 6 to 11 (WDI) and provided free of charge. 15.6 percent of students enrolled in primary school attend private institutions (2010). At the secondary level, this figure increases to 21.8 percent. At the regional level, slightly more students

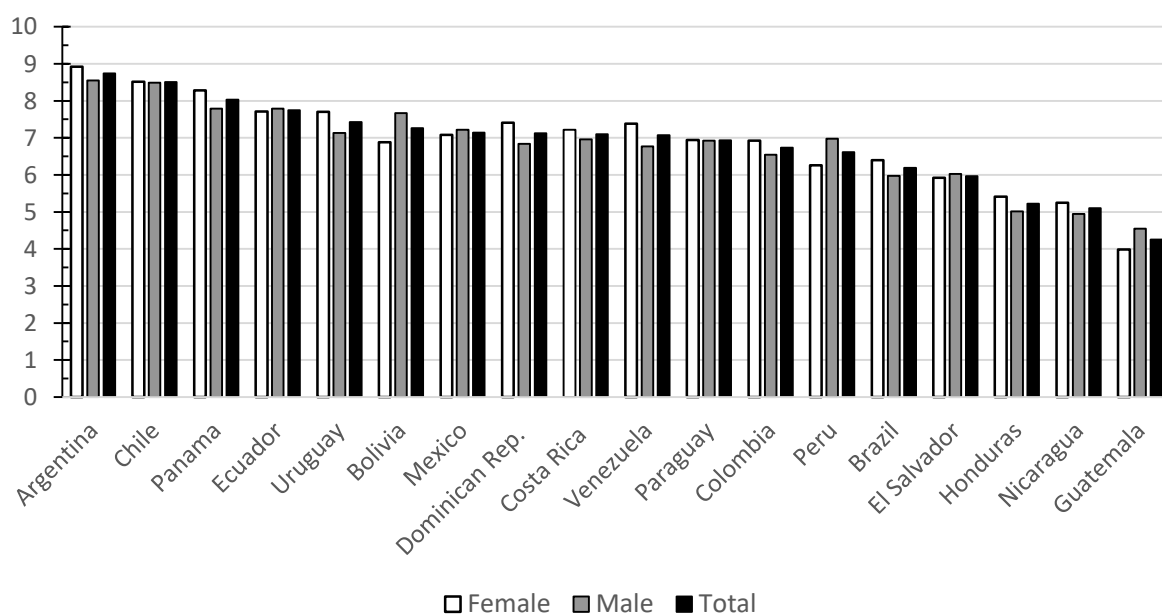
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<sup>54</sup> In concrete terms, Chaaban and Cunningham (2011) suggest that closing the inactivity rate between girls and boys would increase GDP by up to 5.4 percent.

attend private institutions at the primary level (18.2) and slightly fewer at the secondary (19.0 in 2013). The government expenditure on education increased significantly over the last years. Measured as the percentage of total government expenditure, it increased from 15.7 percent in 2002 to 22.8 in 2010 (latest year available, WDI). 9.06 percent of the total government expenditures are assigned to primary education, a share that also increased from 7.5 in 2004. If measured as the share of the GDP, government expenditures on education reach 4.5 percent in 2010 up from 2.4 in 2002 (WDI). At the same time, this share remains below that of Costa Rica (7 percent of GDP, 2014) and Mexico (5.2 percent, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, one of the main achievements of the Sandinista revolution were the successful literacy campaigns: Today, 82.7 percent of women and 82.3 percent of men ages 15 and older are literate. However, Nicaragua still is among the countries that have the least average accumulated years of education in Latin America as the following graph shows.

Figure 12: Average years of education, Latin America countries (Source: SEDLAC latest years available, ca. 2009/2010)



In line with regional trends, women in Nicaragua have recently been outperforming men in education. Since the 1990s, women have continuously had higher completion rates for both primary and secondary schooling (WDI). When looking at enrollment ratios, the gross female to male enrollment ratio in primary school was 0.99. In secondary, that ratio increases to 1.13 (2010), suggesting that more boys than girls drop out as they climb the educational ladder (UNESCO, 2016). The last year with data available for the female to male tertiary enrollment ratio was 2002 when it stood at 1.12, aligned with the Latin America regional trend of more women pursuing tertiary education. For both boys and girls, completion rates have been on the rise. In 2010, the last year for which data on completion rates is available, 89.3 percent of girls completed primary school, and 73.8 percent completed lower secondary education. Among boys, the completion

rates were lower at 81.6 percent for the primary level and only 60.7 percent for the secondary level. These levels continue below the regional averages (78.8 percent of females and 72.1 percent of males complete lower secondary in 2013).

Figure 13: School completion rates by sex in percent, Nicaragua (Source: World Development Indicators)



While a significant share of the literature has concluded that preschool experience and contextual factors are largely more influential on academic outcomes than school and school quality (see for instance the Coleman Report, 1966), Heynemann and Loxley (1983) find evidence that the lower the income of the country, the weaker the influence of students' social status on achievement. While the previous literature had based their findings on developed and high-income countries, the study by Heynemann and Loxley (1983) shows that in developing countries, the predominant influence on student learning is the quality of the schools and teachers to which children are exposed. This makes an even stronger case for the importance of school quality in supporting the overall decrease in social inequality. Low school quality at all levels is a problem cited by several key informants interviewed for this study. While enrollment rates and completion may be important indicators to assess the status of education in a given country, what matters in the end is the educational outcome and learning achieved by the individuals. The Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (TERCE)<sup>55</sup> shows that Nicaragua is among the lowest performers in learning achievements in the region (UNICEF, 2014). At the same time, with the exception of Costa Rica, all Central American countries perform worse than their Latin American neighbors. Compared to SERCE (Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study) results from 2006, learning outcomes have improved very minimally in Nicaragua. Relatedly, the

<sup>55</sup> TERCE reports on comparative learning achievements in the region's countries and on the variables associated with learning achievement levels, in order to contribute to knowledge of the circumstances in which learning takes place in the region.

UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2016 (GEM) shows that in Nicaragua only 44 percent of students in grade 3 and 74 percent of students in grade 6 reach a minimum proficiency in reading. Out of 15 Latin American countries compared in the report, only the Dominican Republic and Paraguay fare worse for reading, and only the Dominican Republic fares worse in mathematics (data for 2014). Using earlier data, the World Bank Poverty Assessment 2008 for Nicaragua shows that both reading and mathematics proficiency is higher among grade 3 and 6 students in urban Managua compared to all other regions of the country, indicative of better quality education in the capital. The GEM 2016 report states that the status of the quality of education facilities is also concerning: only 50 percent of Nicaraguan primary and secondary schools have basic drinking water and only one in four (26 percent) have basic sanitation. Finally, the share of youth (students aged 13–15) that reported psychological bullying in schools is concerning high at slightly above 30 percent (UNESCO, 2016). Additionally, Nicaragua had the highest pupil-teacher ratio in Latin America in both primary and secondary schools, and its teacher work force was also one of the least qualified in the region (World Bank Poverty Assessment, 2008—no more recent data available). Furthermore, a World Bank report finds that Nicaraguan youth are ill-equipped in terms of skills to face labor market demands in the modern economy, suggesting that youth unemployment is set to remain rather high in the upcoming years (World Bank, 2012a).

In addition, repetition rates can be indicative of the quality of the education system (UNESCO, 2012). Students who are overage for their grade due to repetition are at greater risk of leaving school early. Generally, children with the least opportunities arising from poverty and compounding disadvantages are most likely to repeat grades and leave school early (UNESCO, 2012). This represents a poverty trap since the children with the least opportunities will likely have the least educational outcomes and thus, will achieve lower endowments, which will lead to fewer opportunities. Repetition rates in Nicaragua are high compared to the region and stand at 11.0 percent for students in primary and 9.5 percent for secondary and are higher for boys than for girls (which is in line with the regional trends).

Figure 14: Repetition rates primary schooling by sex in percent of enrollment, Nicaragua (Source: World Development Indicators)

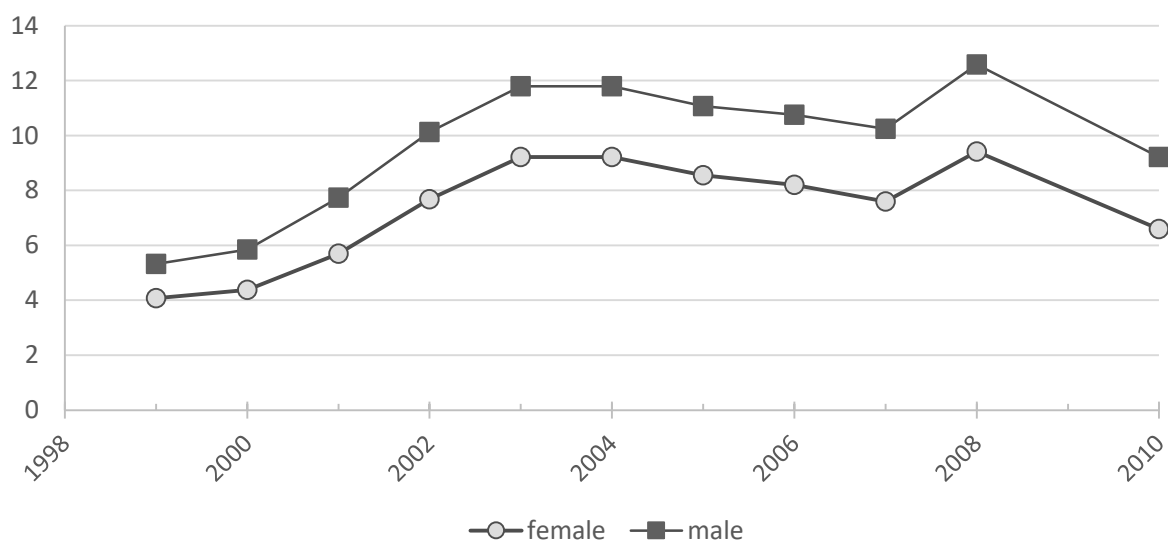
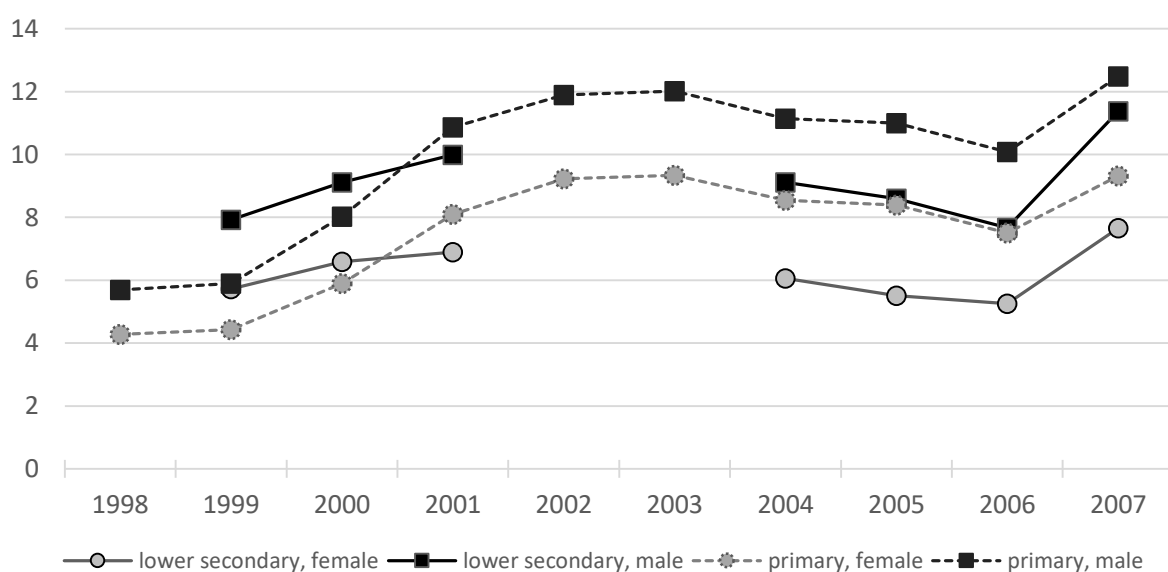


Figure 15: Repetition rates primary and secondary schooling by sex in percent of enrollment, Nicaragua (Source: World Development Indicators)



While these data point in a different direction, interestingly enough the World Bank Poverty Assessment (2008) finds that in Nicaragua, perception about the quality of education of parents with children in primary school are mostly not negative. Around 20 to 25 percent of all parents with children in primary school consider that their education is either regular or bad. The share of parents rating their children's education as excellent is lower among households in the poorest quintiles if compared to households in the highest quintiles. At the same time, the share of those that think that education is of low quality does not exceed a fourth in any of the income groups. As the assessment indicates as well though, high satisfaction with the education received might end up reducing individuals' demand for higher quality education.

Low quality of education may be a significant underlying factor of school dropout. School dropout rates usually increase in secondary schooling and the reasons behind may vary between boys and girls. Secondary school dropout is a growing cause of concern in Latin America, Central America, and in Nicaragua as well. The reason why there has been an increasing number of research and preoccupation on the topic is that secondary school dropout is associated with multiple negative consequences such as reduced economic productivity, threats to social cohesion, and increasing youth risks (Adelman et al., 2016). In Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, 20 percent of those born 1994–1996 were out of school by the age of transition to lower secondary. This means that primary dropout, and in some cases even initial participation, also remain a challenge in these countries (Adelman et al., 2016). In Nicaragua, lower secondary and transition dropout both increased slightly, but the effect was counterbalanced by a reduction in dropout at upper secondary ages (Adelman et al., 2016). Different from the other Central American countries studied in Adelman et al. (2016), Nicaragua is the only country where male upper secondary dropout is considerably higher than the female one, with a 5 percentage point difference between the two. Adelman et al. (2016) show that national averages on school dropout for the Central America countries mask large within-country disparities. Differences in dropout are particularly large when comparing urban and rural populations. Income levels also play an important role in access to upper secondary education. In Nicaragua, the proportion of students enrolled in public upper secondary school is three times larger in decile 9 compared to decile 1 (Adelman et al., 2016). Underlying factors that lead to secondary school dropout include early learning deficits. Such deficits may accumulate over time and contribute to the lack of interest in studying (Adelman et al., 2016). This argument is supported by the ‘concept of dynamic complementarity’ according to which human capital built early makes subsequent investments in human capital more productive (Cunha & Heckman, 2007). It implies that children should build strong foundational skills in early childhood and primary school to ensure their success in secondary. Students with unaddressed learning deficits may get stuck at a grade level while their peers move on, or they may be promoted to higher grades but unable to accompany the curricula. In either case, they are likely to eventually give up or be pushed out by school policies (Pritchett & Beatty, 2015). Being overage is likely to have an impact on students’ dropout rates. In 2014, 24 percent of students in primary education in Nicaragua were overaged, the highest rate in Central America (Adelman et al., 2016).

Discussions around gender and school dropout usually cite economic reasons as the main motivator for boys and the performance of household tasks for girls (USAID, 2012). A similar pattern is found in Nicaragua: 26 percent of girls versus 8 percent of boys declare personal reasons to be the motivators behind their dropping out of school (data ca. 2013, calculations by Adelman et al., 2016). Overall, 47 percent declare that the main reason for dropout was a lack of interest in studying (highest share among the Central American countries studied), followed by 28 percent stating economic reasons, 15 percent referring to personal reasons, 8 percent to lack of access to school, and 2 percent to other reasons. Finally, the literature on the topic also concludes that there are positive correlations between repeated pregnancies, age at first delivery,



educational aspirations, and dropping out of school (Berglund et al., 1997). As girls reach secondary school age, they may leave school due to pregnancy, either at their own will given their care duties, or because they are expelled from schools. In Nicaragua, the Law on Equity of Rights and Opportunities prohibits expulsion or discrimination on the basis of pregnancy.

Related to drop out, the population of youth out of school and out of work (ninis<sup>56</sup>) are a public concern in Latin America and the Caribbean: One in five youth in the region—totaling more than 20 million people aged 15–24—are ninis (De Hoyos et al., 2016). Moreover, the problem has proven very persistent. Women account for two thirds of the region's nini population, and among this group, the single most important risk factor associated with their condition is marriage before age 18, compounded by teenage pregnancy (De Hoyos et al., 2016). Among Nicaraguan youth, 25.22 percent of youth (15–24) are not in education, employment, or training. The difference between boys and girls out of school and out of work vary profoundly: 11.04 percent compared to 40.7 percent respectively (latest data available for 2005).

While the above sections refer to youth of secondary schooling age, work also keeps children of younger age out of school in Nicaragua. Child labor is a severe problem affecting children's education outcomes, particularly among poor households, depriving them of their childhood, their health, and their education. Also, child labor reinforces intergenerational cycles of poverty. It is not only a cause, but also a consequence of social inequalities. The literature shows that child labor has severe impacts on children's intellectual and physical development. Most importantly though, the negative effects on schooling outcomes have been broadly documented: child labor is strongly associated with low educational attainment as evidenced by Psacharopoulos (1997) for urban Bolivia, Rosati and Rossi (2003) for Nicaragua and Pakistan, Ray and Lancaster (2005) for Belize, Cambodia, Namibia, Panama, Philippines and Portugal. Sedlacek et al. (2005) show that based on data from 16 Latin American countries, child labor not only causes significant negative effects on educational enrollment, but also has an even larger adverse effect on the pace of progression through school and the quality of attainment. These negative results are stronger for the poor. Thus, importantly, child labor not only discourages school attendance, but it also lowers the quality of it. Since most working children in Latin America seem to be simultaneously enrolled in school (Sedlacek et al., 2005), this important finding calls for specific initiatives to not only incentivize school enrollment, but to also encourage regular attendance and increase quality of schooling. For Nicaragua specifically, Buonomo (2008) finds that child work has negative effects on educational attainments in the medium term, reflected in higher repetition rates and early drop out. Beyond school attainment, cognitive achievement can also be negatively impacted according to empirical studies of Akabayashi and Psacharopoulos (1999) in Tanzania, Heady (2003) in Ghana, and Gunnarsson et al. (2006) in 11 Latin American countries. Girls' labor may often be less visible since they tend to perform unpaid household chores, while boys are more likely to engage in paid work outside the household. This is also confirmed by Dammert (2010) using data

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<sup>56</sup> Throughout Latin America, youth who are neither working nor in school are often labeled ninis, from the Spanish phrase 'ni estudia ni trabaja.' (De Hoyos et al., 2016)

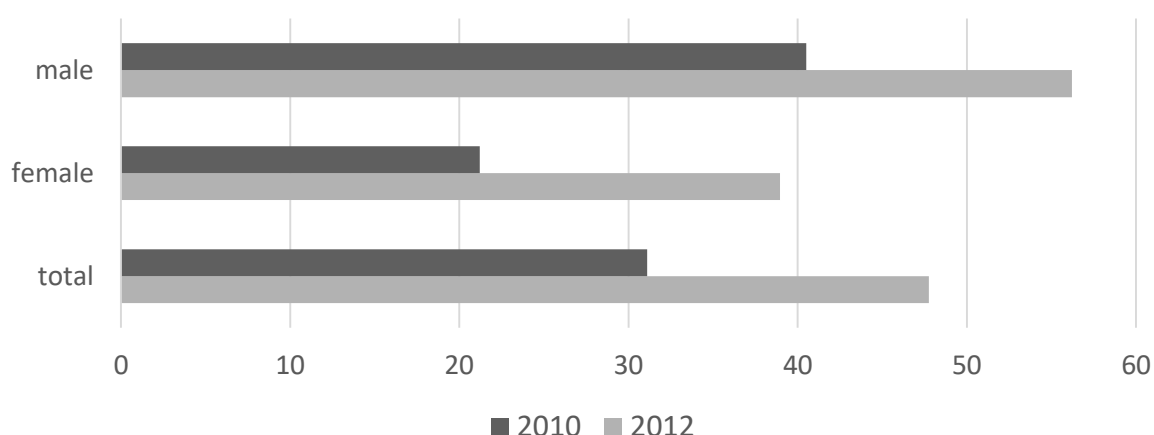
from Nicaragua (focusing on children ages 7 to 14 years old): Older boys spend more time in remunerated work, whereas older girls spend more time in domestic work than their younger siblings. Relatedly, Kruger et al. (2010) find similar results for Brazil. Furthermore, Parish and Willis (1993) find for Taiwan that having an older sister has a positive effect on siblings' education.

Household decisions regarding child labor and education are profoundly intertwined. Apparently, child labor may be considered as a feasible option for an additional income if parents face low incentives to send their children to school (Beegle et al., 2009). In terms of other risk factors, household composition plays an important role: Children in larger families and with siblings under 5 years of age significantly lag behind in all countries. Parental attributes also matter. Younger parents are more likely to have children who lag behind in schooling, as are less educated parents (Sedlacek et al., 2005). At the same time, sex and age of the household head have no significant impact on the probability that children will work, according to the same authors. Sedlacek et al. (2005) though point at the strong effect of parental education: parental education consistently lowers the probability of child labor in all countries analyzed. For every year of parental school attainment, the probability of child labor falls 0.3 to 0.8 percentage points. Nicaragua has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (ILO Convention 138 on Minimum Age and ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor) (Department of Labor, 2015). According to the Department of Labor Report on Child Labor in Nicaragua (2015), the minimum legal age for work is 14 (for hazardous work: 18). The same source stresses that the statements on compulsory education in the law are controversial and may leave children vulnerable to child labor.<sup>57</sup> In Nicaragua, the share of children ages 7–14 in employment increased between 2010 and 2012 to reach almost one in two children under age 14. Boys are much more likely to be in employment if compared to girls.

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<sup>57</sup> On the one hand, Article 121 of the Constitution states that primary school education is compulsory without specifying an age. Furthermore, under Articles 19 and 23 of the Education Law, education is compulsory only through the sixth grade, which it specifies is up to age 12 and the end of primary school. Slightly different from that, Article 43 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code states that both primary and secondary school education are compulsory, suggesting up to age 17, but does not specifically state an age.

Figure 16: Children in employment, percent of children ages 7–14, Nicaragua (Source: World Development Indicators)



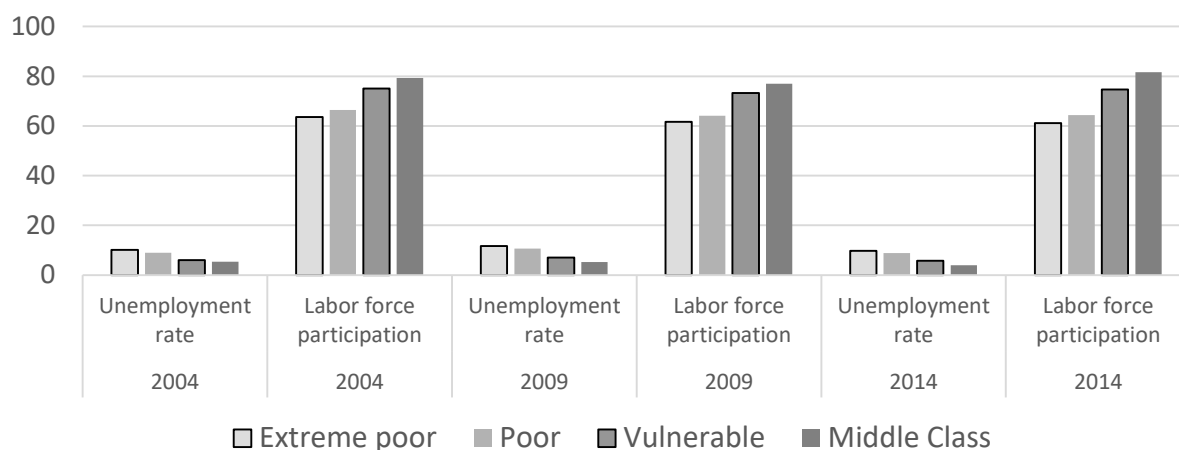
The vast majority of employed children are unpaid family workers (82.9 percent in 2012) with girls being slightly more likely to be unpaid family workers (86.7 percent versus 80.4 percent among boys). Only 9.5 percent of children in employment are wage workers—here, boys show slightly higher shares compared to girls (10.5 percent versus 8.0 percent).

Summarizing, overall access to education in Nicaragua has improved significantly over the past decades, for both men and women. At this point, women outperform men in education. However, several sources point to the problem of very low quality in education, which not only makes education unappealing for many young Nicaraguans, but also leaves many poorly equipped for life and work.

### 3.5 Gender and paid work in Nicaragua

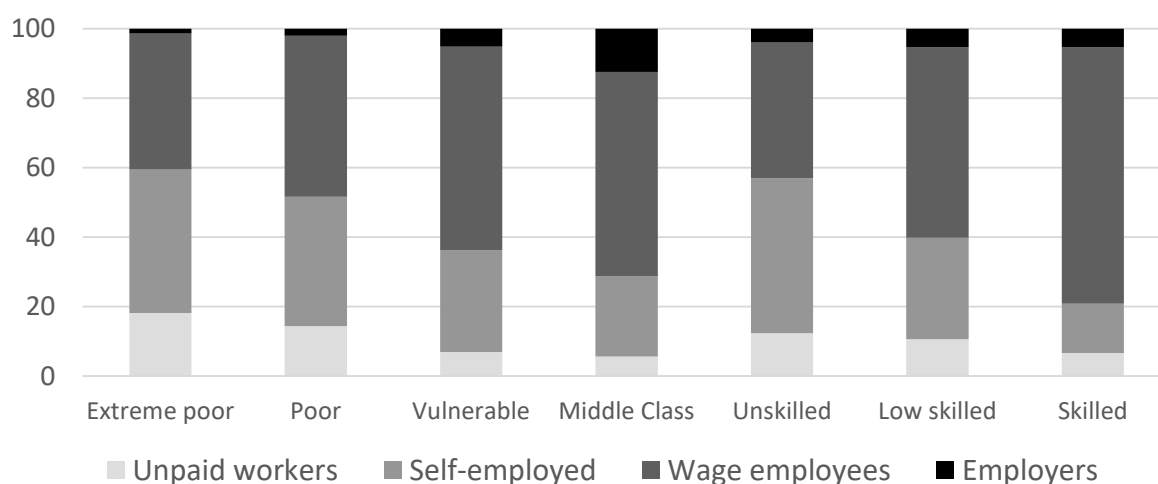
In Nicaragua, labor force participation increases with income levels. This has not changed over the past decade: the poorer the individual, the less likely it is that she/he will be participating in the labor market. Similarly, unemployment increases with poverty status.

Figure 17: Labor force participation and unemployment by poverty status in percent, Nicaragua (Source: World Development Indicators)



The poverty status is also related to the type of work one does: the extremely poor and the poor are more likely to be unpaid workers or self-employed while the proportion of wage employees and employers significantly increases among the vulnerable and the middle-class (measured here by monetary income: extreme poor: 2.50 USD (2005 PPP); poor: 4.00 USD (2005 PPP); vulnerable: 4–10 USD (2005 PPP); middle-class: 10–50 USD (2005 PPP)).<sup>58</sup>

Figure 18: Type of workers by poverty status and skill level in percent, Nicaragua (data 2004) (Source: LAC Equity Lab)

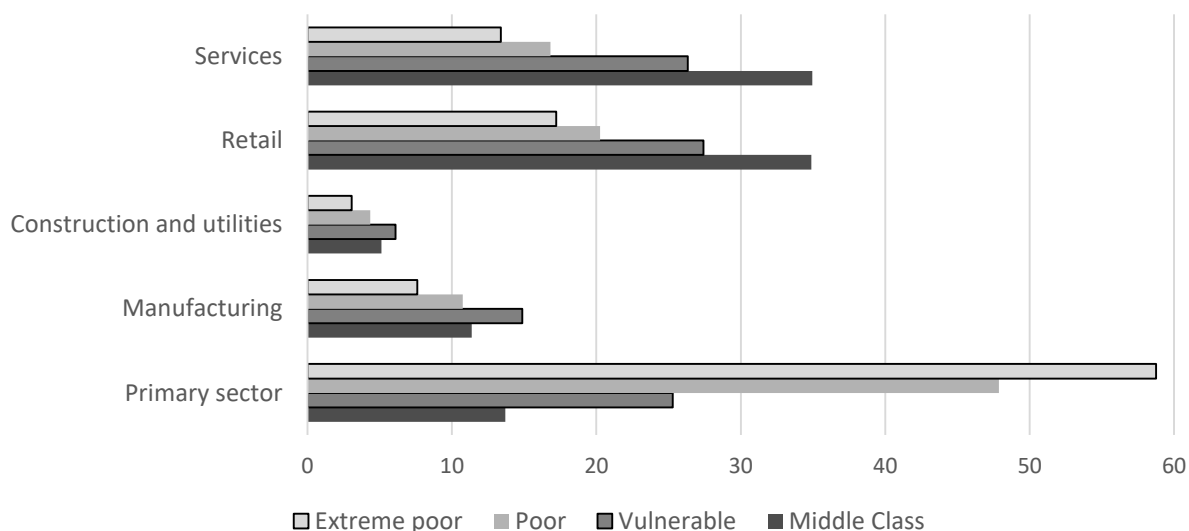


The poor and non-poor also tend to enter different sectors of the labor market. While the poor and extreme poor are much more likely to be found in the primary sector, the middle-class and

<sup>58</sup> This follows Ferreira et al. (2012) who defined four economic groups based on the concept of economic security: (i) the poor who are those individuals with a per capita income below \$4 per person per day; (ii) the vulnerable who are with high risk of falling back into poverty and have incomes between \$4 to \$10 per person per day; (iii) the middle-class who are those individuals living with incomes between \$10 and \$50 per person per day; and (iv) the rich who are those with incomes above \$50 per person per day (all in 2005 US\$ PPP).

the vulnerable are more likely to work in services or retail. The composition of workers in manufacturing and construction is almost equally distributed among the different income groups.

Figure 19: Labor participation in economic sectors by poverty status (data for 2014), Nicaragua (Source: World Development Indicators)

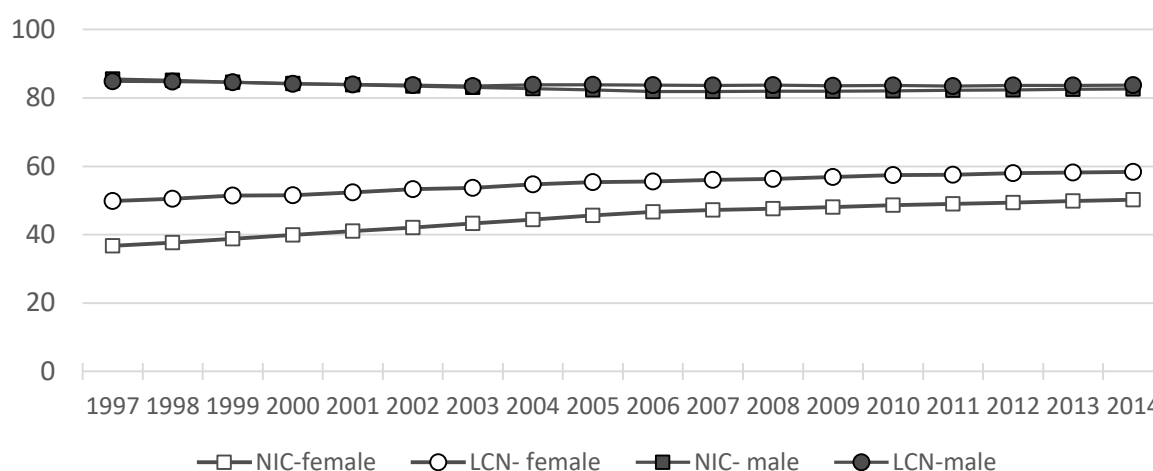


As shown before, the status of girls' education has improved impressively in Latin America over the past decades, and the gender gap has virtually disappeared for primary schooling and closed and often reversed for secondary schooling. However, these achievements have not yet translated into substantive gains in the labor markets. One of the major constraints to women's labor force participation are issues related to care (Mateo Diaz & Rodriguez-Chamussy, 2016). While there have been tremendous improvements in women's labor force participation,<sup>59</sup> from 36.7 percent in 1997 to 50.2 percent in 2014, it is still significantly below the 58.5 percent at the regional average and many women still continue without an income of their own.<sup>60</sup> Compared to that, 82.6 percent of Nicaraguan males participate in the labor force, similar to the regional average on labor force participation (83.7 percent in 2014).

<sup>59</sup> Female labor force participation is defined as the share of women who are joining the labor force (as part of all women). The calculations here are based on population ages 15–64 (WDI).

<sup>60</sup> Female labor force participation rates are likely low because the definition of labor force used by the World Development Indicators does not include unpaid work that is often carried out by Nicaraguan women (as in other countries as well). It excludes homemakers and other unpaid caregivers.

Figure 20: Labor force participation rate (share of female/male population ages 15–64 in percent), Nicaragua (NIC) and Latin America (LCN) (modeled ILO estimate) (Source: World Development Indicators)



At the same time, the graph also shows that the gap in female labor force participation between regional averages and Nicaragua has been closing over the past decades. Diaz Mateo and Chamussy (2016) provide evidence that increased female labor force participation contributes to growth, poverty reduction, and fiscal sustainability. Lower labor force participation, particularly among the poorest women, is associated with higher probabilities of intergenerational transmission of poverty and inequality. Female labor income has played a critical role in the Latin America region in achieving the poverty declines of the last decade with their labor market participation rates growing (World Bank, 2012b). In Nicaragua, female labor income alone contributed to 2.8 percentage points drop in poverty (4 USD) between 2004 and 2014 according to the World Bank’s LAC Equity Lab. This is higher than the contribution at a regional level on average during the same period: in Latin America, female labor force participation contributed 2.2 percentage points to the overall reduction in poverty. Education is an important driver of female labor force participation. Labor participation remains constantly flat for women with less than 6 years of education but rises sharply thereafter, narrowing the gender gap in participation rates (World Bank, 2012c). Not surprisingly, a large number of women in the 15 to 24 age bracket cite the lack of childcare options as the main reason for not being in the labor force (World Bank, 2012a).

In 2014, the unemployment rates<sup>61</sup> were 5.3 percent for both women and men in Nicaragua, falling from earlier years. Youth unemployment rates are higher though, particularly for females (9.7 percent), but they remain significantly below regional averages (17.2 percent, 2014). High rates of informality and of self-employment as well as low unemployment rates are typical of low- and middle-income countries where, in the absence of a social safety net, unemployment cannot be afforded (Pozzoli, 2010). Overall, unemployment has decreased significantly for populations with only primary education (both women and men). At the same time, it rose for those with

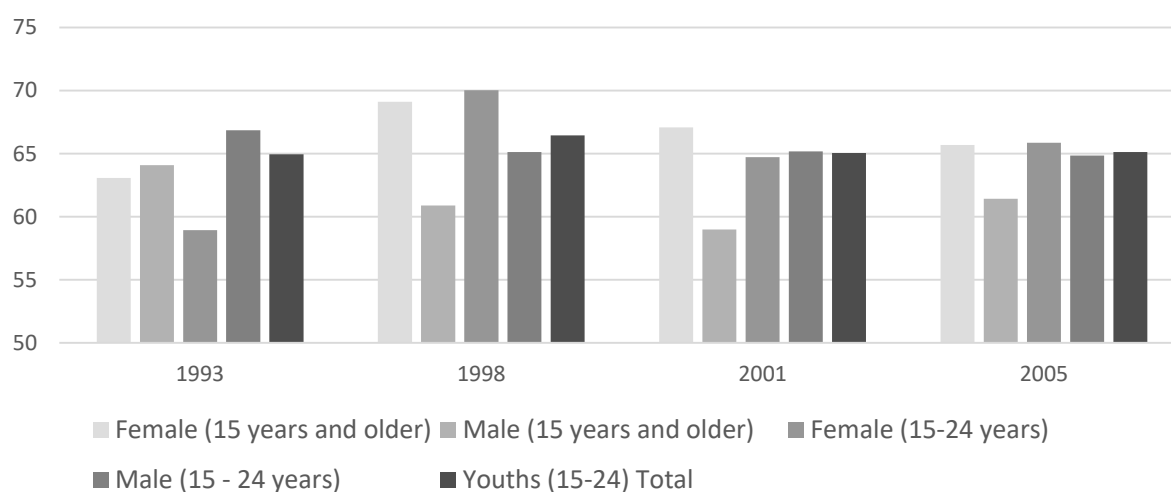
<sup>61</sup> Unemployment refers to the share of the labor force that is without work but available for and seeking employment. Definitions of labor force and unemployment differ by country (WDI).

secondary education during the last decade (again, both women and men). Those with tertiary education show the lowest and most constant unemployment rates among all three groups. Women with tertiary education are slightly more likely to be unemployed if compared to men (World Bank - LAC Equity Lab).

The quality of women's labor market participation shows another set of challenges. The Economist Intelligence Unit (2012) assigns Nicaragua a score of only 8.3 (compared to the average in Latin America of 27.4) on a scale of 0 to 100 for economic opportunities for women considering the kind of jobs they have access to, working conditions, income they earn, and access to resources. The Nicaraguan labor market is characterized by a high degree of gender segregation. With regard to the sectorial distribution of female employment, Nicaragua follows the regional trend in Latin America and the Caribbean with about 75 percent of women employed in the services sector, about 18.8 percent in the industry sector, and about 6.2 percent in the agricultural sector. When it comes to male employment, however, Nicaragua shows a different pattern: a much larger share of Nicaraguan men is employed in the agricultural sector (41.2 percent), followed by 38.7 percent in service and 20.1 percent in industry. According to ILO data, the number of women in manufacturing (a branch of the industry sector) exceeds that of men. In 2010, a total of 154,557 women had manufacturing jobs compared to 144,757 men (ILO, 2010). The majority of these women work in Zonas Francas, export-oriented zones also called maquiladoras, which are well known for their exploitative and dangerous labor conditions (OECD, 2014). The definition of Zona Franca, according to Art. 1 of the Ley de Zonas Francas Industriales de Exportación is as follows: "Every area of the national territory without resident population, under the supervision of the General Directorate of Customs, under special customs supervision and declared as such by the Executive Power." (own translation). This law further specifies that Zonas Francas are mainly aimed at promoting investment and exports through the establishment of different companies engaged in the production and export of goods or services under an exceptional fiscal and customs regime. According to the Law, they are considered outside the national territory and therefore exempt from taxes (Article No. 2). In 2012, 101,192 workers were active in Zonas Francas in Nicaragua, the majority of workers being females (Maria Elena Cuadra, 2013).

Furthermore, women are more likely to be self-employed than men. In 2014, almost 58.5 percent of women reported self-employment compared to about 50.8 percent of men. The latter are slightly more represented among salaried workers and are also more often employers (7.2 percent compared to 2.5 percent of women). Self-employment is often the result of a shortage of salaried, formal jobs. Furthermore, only 10.3 percent of all cooperatives nationally are led by women (USAID, 2012). Informality (defined as salaried workers in small firms, non-professional, self-employed, and zero-income workers) has become more evenly distributed between sex and age groups compared to earlier data. At the same time, shares are high among all groups.

Figure 21: Share of informal workers in percent, Nicaragua (definition: Informal=salaried workers in small firms, non-professional, self-employed, and zero-income workers) (Source: SEDLAC)



In salaried jobs women tend to have lower monthly earnings compared to men. Even more concerning though, the gender gap in monthly income increased in Nicaragua between 2000 and 2010: While in 2000 women made 83 percent of male wages on average, in 2010 this share decreased to 80 percent, thus widening the gender gap in earnings (World Bank, 2012b). However, this gap may also be due to the fact that women work on average fewer hours a month in salaried work. Nicaragua, together with Argentina, has the highest proportion of women working part-time in the region, more than 35 percent (UN, 2015). And finally, gender differences in the type of firm ownership illustrate the lower quality of women's labor market participation: women's participation in firm ownership decreases with increasing firm size. 66.5 percent of small firms are owned by women, 58.7 percent of medium-sized firms and only 32.6 percent of large firms. At the same time, firm ownership is higher than on average in Latin American countries (42.7 percent) and even higher if compared to other middle-income countries (37.6 percent) (World Bank IFC Enterprise Survey: Country Profile Nicaragua, data 2010).

Another important factor to consider when analyzing the labor market dynamics in Nicaragua are the country's substantial migratory movements.<sup>62</sup> Many Nicaraguans leave the country, or move within the country, due to the lack of work opportunities. These temporary or permanent movements necessarily have an effect on individuals, families, communities, and the society as a whole. It is estimated that more than 10 percent of Nicaraguans live outside of their native country<sup>63</sup> and that in the last few years, more women than men have left the country in search of better employment opportunities. Overall slightly more Nicaraguan men (53 percent of migrants) than women live abroad. Most Nicaraguans migrate to the United States, Costa Rica, and other neighboring countries. South-south migration has overall increased in magnitude. When migrating, men are predominantly working in the agriculture, forestry, and fishery, and women

<sup>62</sup> The following section is based on IOM's *Perfil Migratorio Nicaragua* (2013) if not otherwise stated.

<sup>63</sup> Only El Salvador has a higher share of citizens living abroad (15 percent) among the Central American countries.



are almost exclusively employed in the services sector, working as maids and domestic help. Nicaraguan migrants make an important economic contribution: Remittances make up 12.5 percent of the GDP, making Nicaragua one of the top remittance receiving countries in the world. Most recipients of remittances are women (74 percent), and they invest the money to a large degree in education, food, and health services. Many of the temporary migrants are illegal migrants, which makes them more likely to be paid wages below the minimum wage and not receive health insurance and pension. They may become vulnerable given their legal status, and thus, there has also been evidence of forced labor and human rights violations (IOM, 2013).

Female emigrants face additional risks to their safety and well-being. For instance, Nicaraguan women residing in Costa Rica have a higher fertility rate than Costa Rican women and Nicaraguans in Nicaragua. This higher rate can in part be attributed to the increased levels of vulnerability of the Nicaraguan migrant women, especially among adolescents. Nicaraguan migrants often have limited access to adequate health and reproductive services, have less access to contraceptives, and become more easily targeted for sexual abuse (World Bank & IDB, 2008). Furthermore, and as noticeable in the qualitative data collected, due to prevailing social norms, women are often stigmatized for leaving children behind in their country of origin, facing accusations of abandoning their family. These perceptions and prejudices are rooted in traditional and patriarchal values assigning a higher value to the mother being in the household than the father.

There are also gender-related implications for those staying behind: Oftentimes, female relatives of migrants assume the impact of migration at home. It is not uncommon that another female in the household assumes household responsibilities and the care of children and elderly, which was also evidenced in the qualitative data collected. Among the Nicaraguan migrant population in Costa Rica, more than half said that their children were taken care of by their grandmother (53.0 percent), 31.7 percent by their mother, 5.1 percent by an aunt and only 4.7 percent stayed with their father. Hence, another implication of the high female emigration is that the workload for those women staying behind increases (IOM, 2013). The literature on the impacts of migration on the well-being of those children and adolescents who stay behind is not conclusive. In Nicaragua, half the migrants to Costa Rica are less than 25 years old and half of them are women (Macours & Vakis, 2010). Supportive and nurturing environments and parenting have proven to be extremely important for early childhood development (Britto et al., 2016; Fernald et al., 2006; Macours & Vakis, 2014). Clearly, the absence of parents can have negative effects on children's well-being. Cortés (2011) presents a comprehensive literature review showing that some authors argue that the separation from the family can cause a breakdown of the adolescents' network structures (Aguilera-Guzman et al., 2004). At the same time, Bryant (2005) states that the emptiness left by the migrating parents can be filled by others (extended family members). According to the literature reviewed by Cortés (2011), adolescents will likely stay with one parent if the other migrates. However, if both parents migrate (or the adolescent was living in a single-parent household prior), it is usually the grandparents who will take care of the adolescent. In

these cases, differences in mentality may cause additional complications. Deterioration of school performance, drop out, or engagement in crime and violence was also documented as an effect of being left behind as an adolescent (Piperno, 2007 and 2011). Also, some authors document an increase in work among older adolescents, which may negatively impact their school attainment (Lopez Cordova, 2005). Finally, Pinos and Ochoa Ordoñez (1998) find an increase in drug and alcohol abuse among children in migrant households.

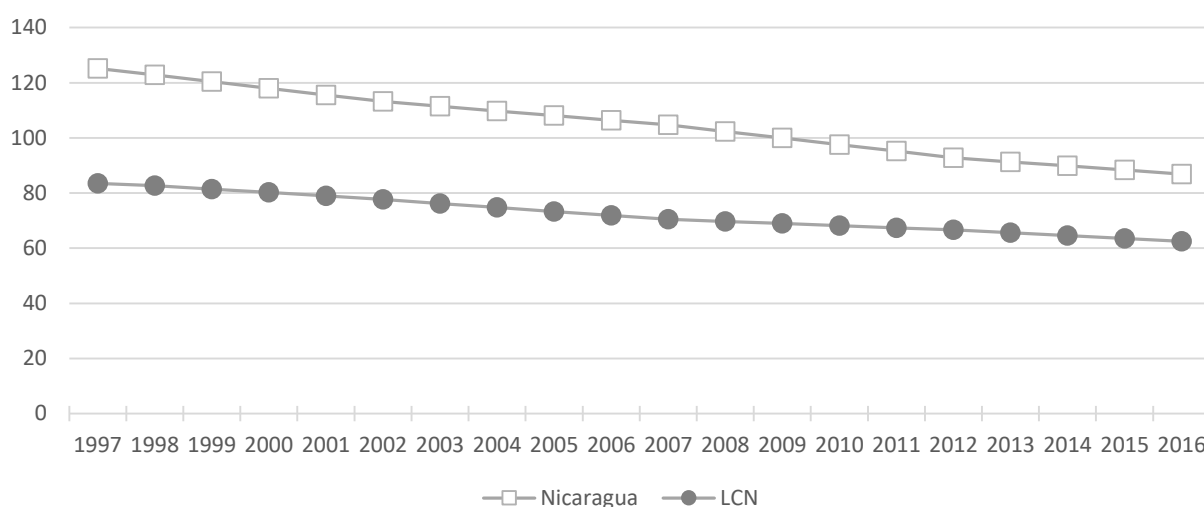
On the other hand, there are also a number of studies which show evidence on the positive impacts from remittances on children and families staying behind. Based on a data set on international migration, remittances, inequality, and poverty from 71 developing countries, Adams and Page (2005a) show that remittances decrease the severity of poverty. Furthermore, Macours and Vakis (2010) review the literature and also find strong evidence on welfare gains from migration and remittances. Among the most prominently stated positive impacts from remittances is the increased schooling of children. The authors also report positive gains in health as associated to receiving remittances. As often, a lot certainly depends on the very specific context in which people migrate as well as on the specificities of family composition and arrangements under which migration occurs.

### 3.6 Teenage pregnancy and associated factors in Nicaragua

One of the main motivators behind my interest in researching the decisions of young women and men around their fertility specifically in Nicaragua were the high adolescent fertility rates in the country. As seen above, the country has high poverty rates, shows mixed results in terms of women's manifestations of agency and education seems to be of low quality. In addition, the country is known worldwide for their turbulent (recent) history and the fight of the Sandinista revolution for social justice and women's rights. At the same time, traditional groups (including the churches) remain relevant and important, both socially and politically, as was also seen earlier. The following section will briefly present the key data on the prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the country.

In Nicaragua, the adolescent fertility rate remains significantly above the regional average. In 2014, Nicaragua had the second highest adolescent fertility rate in Latin America, only surpassed by the Dominican Republic. However, over the last decade teenage pregnancy rates have significantly decreased in Nicaragua. There was a reduction from 118 births per 1000 girls aged 15–19 (2000) to 86.9 (2016).

Figure 22: Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15–19), Nicaragua (NIC) and Latin America (LCN) (Source: World Development Indicators)



About a quarter of adolescent girls are pregnant or have a child between 15 and 19 years old; this figure slightly dropped from 25.9 percent in 2007 to 24.4 percent in 2012 (ENDESA, 2012) leaving it the Latin American country with the highest share of teenage mothers. In the context of an overall decrease in fertility rates (from 2.6 in 2007 to 2.2 in 2016), it is particularly interesting to note that, while teenage fertility rates also declined slowly, the contribution of teenage fertility to overall fertility has increased (or: fertility is moving towards younger ages). Between 2007 and 2012, the median age for first births fell from 19.8 to 18.8 years (ENDESA, 2012). Teenage pregnancies are concentrated among the 17–19 year old girls, with almost half the 19 year olds having had a baby or currently being pregnant.

As observed in other contexts, the proportion of teenage pregnancies is higher among the rural population compared to urban. In fact, a higher share of girls residing in rural areas gets pregnant before the age of 19: 28.9 percent compared to 21.1 percent in urban areas (ENDESA, 2012). There are striking regional differences: the Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) and the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS) are the only regions in the country where this figure exceeds 30 percent (31.3 percent of girls ages 15–19 in the RAAN region have given birth and 31.5 percent of girls in the same age group in the RAAS region (ENDESA, 2012)). Teenage pregnancy rates are the highest for girls with the lowest level of education and from the poorest income groups. This finding is consistent with evidence from other countries in the region highlighting the close relationship between low educational attainment and early motherhood (Azevedo et al., 2012). Again, it is noteworthy that the group of those with the lowest education levels showed an increase in the share of teenage mothers between the last two surveys.

Figure 23: Percentage of teenage women who have begun childbearing (are mothers or pregnant) by area of residence, Nicaragua (Source: DHS Statcompiler)

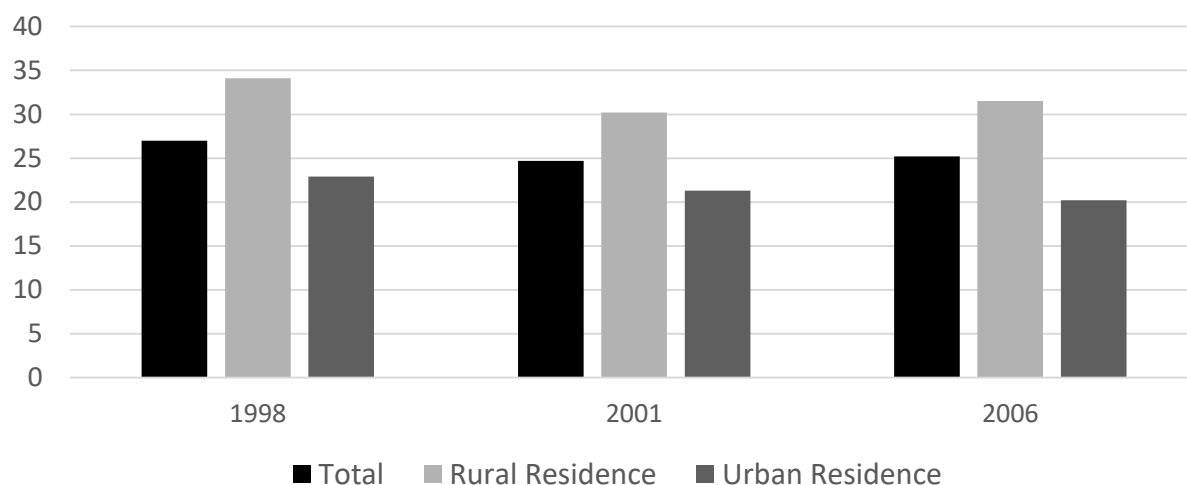
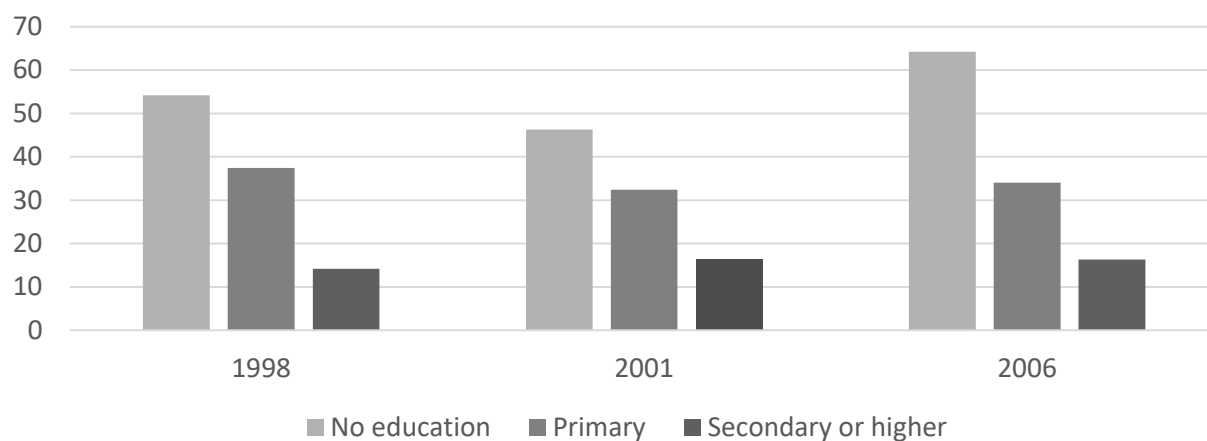
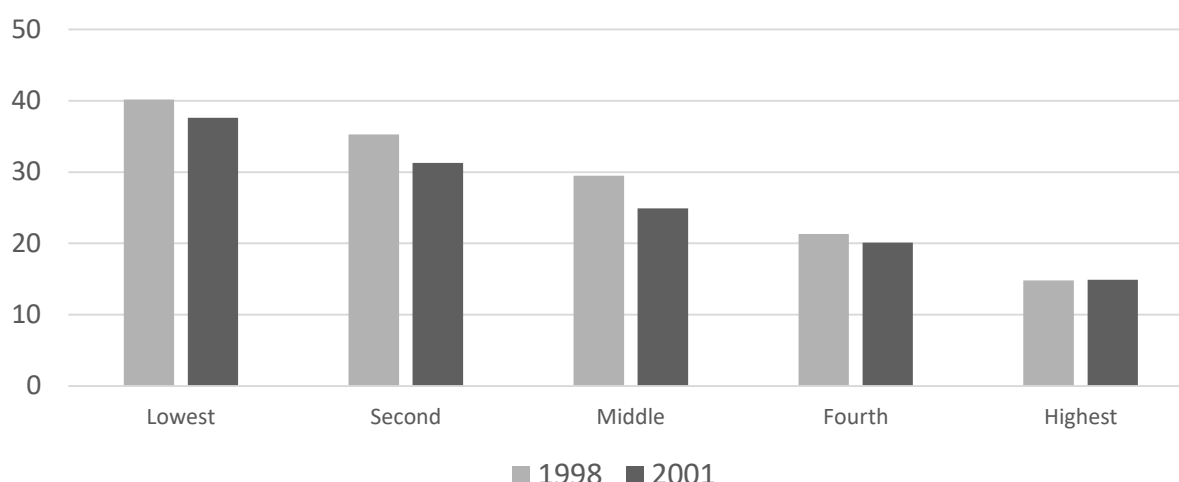


Figure 24: Percentage of teenage women who have begun childbearing (are mothers or pregnant) by highest level of education, Nicaragua (Source: DHS Statcompiler)



Similarly, and also consistent with data available in other countries (see Azevedo et al., 2012), teenage pregnancy consistently decreases with income quintile.

Figure 25: Percentage of teenage women who have begun childbearing (are mothers or pregnant) by wealth quintile, Nicaragua (Source: DHS Statcompiler)



One of the well-documented correlations of teenage motherhood is the age of sexual initiation. The latest ENDESA (2012) shows that sexual initiation is moving towards younger ages: from 17.4 years in 2006/07 to 16.8 years (2012). Earlier DHS data from 2001 show that girls are more likely to have had sexual intercourse before the age of 15 if living in rural areas and having no or little education. At the age of 18, 59.2 percent of rural girls have had sexual intercourse and 66.4 percent of those girls with primary education only. Early marriage is another factor commonly associated with teenage pregnancy. In fact, in 2012, 10.4 percent of Nicaraguan women were married by age 15, and 40.6 percent were married by the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2016). Most recent data (ENDESA 2012) shows that the average age of women at first union is 17.4 years in Nicaragua. While in urban areas this average increases to 18.1 years of age, in rural areas it drops to 16.6 years of age. Relatedly, the average age of the mother at birth of her first child is 18.8 years—19.3 in urban areas and 18.3 in rural areas (ENDESA 2012).

The high levels of teenage pregnancy and the social implications it entails remain a development challenge in Nicaragua. The 2012 USAID gender assessment has pointed out that “improving early reproductive health among women in Nicaragua has the potential to be a key driver in gender outcomes given the correlations between teenage pregnancy and maternal mortality, lower education achievement and poor labor market outcomes” (USAID, 2012). The following chapters—based on the qualitative data collected as well as the review of relevant literature—will show the processes and conditions that lead to teenage pregnancies as well as some of the consequences experienced by the young women (and the men who father their children).

### 3.7 Discussion

This chapter aimed to provide a perspective on the context in which the qualitative data was collected. It also presented an introduction into the historical and political context, and furthermore, it aimed to present specific social phenomena observed at the macro level (such as

high poverty levels, ambivalent indicators of women's overall agency, low quality of education, and limited economic opportunities, particularly for women). As the data and literature presented here show, Nicaragua is a country with high but decreasing poverty rates, with disparities within the country (particularly when comparing urban and rural populations). Nicaragua has made impressive gains in overall increases of access to education. However, the quality of that education remains low, leaving the population poorly equipped with regard to skills and capabilities. The situation of women in the country is profoundly contradictory in nature. In some dimensions of gender equality, Nicaragua is among the best performers in Latin America, while on others, it is among the worst. Of particular concern for this research are the high levels of teenage pregnancy throughout the country.

In terms of important and continuously influential 'institutions,' there is the revolution and its promises to address poverty and inequality. Nicaragua, with its long history of struggle for social justice, on the one hand, and the prevalence of traditional gender norms often inspired by traditional religious values, on the other hand, is thus a fascinating case study in terms of how conflicting views on women's role in society can play out. The recent history of the revolution and the socio-political changes induced by it are still very prevalent in people's everyday discussions in Nicaragua. The Sandinista victory was accompanied by peoples' high hopes that the new government would address poverty and inequality, including gender inequality, in the country. Indeed, several early policies aimed to tackle the poor living conditions specifically of the rural population. However, the U.S.-supported Contra War profoundly weakened the government and diverged budget and effort from other important policy areas. Thus, in 1990, the FSLN lost the elections to a conservative coalition. After its reelection in 2006, the FSLN-led government soon introduced pro-poor policies. Still, many former supporters expressed their disappointment in the Frente due to the party's support in changing the abortion law among other issues. Some of the most prominent FSLN figures left the party.

Today, Nicaragua has some of the most progressive legislation regarding women's legal rights, but it also enforces an abortion law that is among the strictest in the world. When it comes to women's development outcomes, one will similarly notice a picture marked by contradictions. Though Nicaragua is among the top performers in the Latin American region in terms of women's political representation, the restrictions in women's sexual and reproductive rights (as evidenced by high maternal mortality ratios for instance) as well as women's exposure to intimate partner violence show that women's rights are still a severe concern in the country.

Opportunities available to young people are also marked by constraints and limitations. While women now outperform men in terms of school attainment, the quality of education women (and men) receive in the country seems to be an issue of concern, according to several authors, key informants interviewed for this research, and proxy indicators. Furthermore, the better educational outcomes of women do not translate into labor market opportunities. Women are lagging behind men in participation and quality of participation, an issue that is very likely linked to the opportunities available and also, to social norms governing women's roles in the private

and the public spheres. The chapter concludes by briefly showing the overall teenage pregnancy rates (which are the second highest in the whole Latin America and the Caribbean region) and their associations with other variables such as education, location of residence, and household wealth.

These dimensions provide important insights for the contextualization of the findings emerging from the qualitative data, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

## 4 Decision-making process around teenage motherhood

As mentioned in the introduction to this work, teenage pregnancy has received a significant amount of policy and research attention over the past decade. Several reasons contribute to this attention. One of those relates to the implications of excess fertility: Early motherhood leads girls to having more children over their lifetime (Wodon et al., 2017). Furthermore though, the evidence on the multiple negative consequences of teenage childbearing on the mother, the child, and even other family members is quite compelling. Additionally, teenage pregnancy has been interpreted as a negation of basic human rights. One of the common assumptions related to teenage pregnancies is that these are largely unplanned and unwanted. Lack of control over one's fertility has several human rights implications that were already discussed in the introduction to this work. A pregnancy that happened beyond the control of the woman is a negation of her own right to decide over her sexuality and fertility. Besides, an unplanned pregnancy has implications for the fulfilment of other rights (including the rights to education, to social security, to live free from physical and mental violence and sexual exploitation), so the argument presented earlier. On the other hand, some authors, such as Luker (1996) draw attention to the fact that there are a number of ideologically motivated misconceptions around teenage motherhood. She strongly criticizes the “demonization” of the young mothers, emphasizing that teenage pregnancy is wrongfully discussed as an issue of sexually irresponsible teenage women. Instead, according to Luker (1996), early pregnancy is merely a symptom of poverty, not a cause of it.

Instead of focusing primarily on the consequences of teenage pregnancy, the focus of this research lies at deepening the understanding of the decision-making process of young Nicaraguan women regarding pregnancy in their adolescence. For that purpose, this chapter will first present the main decision-types encountered in the data and the way how those types are distributed across the different subsamples interviewed. Following that summary overview, the chapter will discuss each of the decision-types more in-depth.

### 4.1 Decision-types encountered in the data

In the data collected and analyzed for this study, three types of decisions can be identified. Interestingly though, the decision processes and the different outcomes are linked to the specific groups that were interviewed in a quite distinguishable manner. Thus, decision processes and outcomes may sometimes be almost exclusively linked to one specific subsample of the study (based on their characteristics) and almost inexistent in any of the other groups. The following table presents an overview of these associations:

Table 5: Decision-types across interviewed groups

Decision-type	Poor with pregnancy experience	Poor no pregnancy	Middle-class with	Middle-class no pregnancy experience



		experience in adolescence	pregnancy experience	
Planned pregnancy	Significant presence	None	None	None
Did not plan pregnancy but did not actively avoid it; letting it happen	Significant presence	Significant presence	All	None
Postponed pregnancy	None	Some presence	None	All

As documented here, planned pregnancies in adolescence only appear among the poor with pregnancy experience in this sample. Postponing of pregnancies, on the other hand, is the only process among the middle-class without pregnancy experience and it very rarely appears among the poor without pregnancy experience. Finally, the absence of active planning is the dominant process among the middle-class with pregnancy experience, among the poor with pregnancy experience and still quite present among the poor without pregnancy experience. Generally, significant differences can be noted in the outcomes of the decision-making processes. But potentially more interesting is the very clear difference in the level of active participation in decision-making. The interesting endeavor of this work then is not only to assess these differences, but to further disentangle the factors that influence both the process and the outcome of the decision.

## 4.2 Motivators behind planned pregnancy in adolescence

While precise data on the share of planned pregnancies is missing, Singh (1998) based on the analysis of DHS data from a wide range of countries shows that most births to married adolescents are wanted and planned across countries. This is not true for births among unmarried adolescent women. The Latin American countries in this review (Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru), while following the same pattern, show less discrepancies between married/unmarried adolescent women compared to countries in other regions where adolescent childbirth seems to be even more clearly driven by child marriage. Guzmán et al. (2001) using DHS data for Latin America show interesting results: Of all age groups, the highest share of planned and wanted pregnancies is for women 20 years and younger in a number of Latin American countries (more specifically, Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, with the only two exceptions being Brazil and Haiti). However, it has to be noted that the data the authors used are from the mid 90s. For Nicaragua, the share of pregnancies ‘wanted in the moment of pregnancy’ was 71 percent, the share of ‘wanted later on’ was 19.1 percent, and the share of ‘unwanted pregnancy’ was merely 8.5 among women younger than 20.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> For a discussion on the limitations in accuracy of assessing ‘planned’ pregnancies after a birth, see related discussion in the methodological annex.

One of the reasons why some women in the sample of this qualitative study aim for a pregnancy at a relatively early age, why they plan one and act on these plans, is that they ‘feel ready’ for being a mother. On the other hand, it also means they either have already lived the things they assume that should be lived before motherhood or that there are simply not very many things they desire to experience before motherhood necessarily or a combination of both. Some research indicates that likely the latter hypothesis is true: Poverty and the absence of opportunities lead to what Burton (1996) calls an “accelerated life course.” The ethnographer shows that individuals in difficult environments mature early and life events are compressed into shorter time spans. In this data, clear divergence can be observed between the poor and the middle-class with regard to those things that should happen or be achieved before having a child. Early unions are one of the strong drivers of pregnancy with the young women believing that a pregnancy will ‘formalize the union.’<sup>65</sup> Several young women interviewed state that after entering a union, the ‘normal’ and obvious next step, which would almost automatically follow and would strengthen and formalize their relationships was a child, as the following quote exemplifies:

*Interviewer: And why did you decide to have a child at such young age?*

*B: Because I wanted and he wanted ... because I already wanted to build a family ... (woman, P/P)<sup>66</sup>*

This finding is consistent with qualitative research conducted in poor neighborhoods in the United States. For instance, Kendall et al. (2005) show that the desire to assert adulthood and to attain greater intimacy with partners seems to be a powerful motivating factor for childbearing among the poor. It is also consistent with a 2003 study by Edin and Kefalas, who found in their ethnographic research in the U.S. that young poor women feel that parenthood is the start into an adult life. Another important motivating factor is related to the fact that several male partners are engaged in parallel relationships or have children with either previous or current parallel partners. In those contexts, some interviewees stated they wanted to ‘also’ have a child with that partner to be even with the other competing relationship their partners may have had or may still sustain.

Childbearing is also often a planned objective as a way to be loved and to compensate for a lack of emotional support (Davies et al., 2006; Arai, 2003; Frost & Oslak, 1999; Edin & Kefalas, 2003). The data in this study revealed that loneliness and the need for company was very prominently mentioned by poor women who had planned to get pregnant. As will be discussed more in-depth in Chapter 9, poor women in particular are exposed to social isolation from family and friends, as a consequence of social gender norms. In that situation, they hope a baby would help distract

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<sup>65</sup> In Nicaragua, the *unión de hecho* (de facto union) is a status which is legally protected in the Ley de Alimentos (N 143, de 1992). Basically equivalent to a formal marriage, it is often the preferred option by the poor because of its low cost.

<sup>66</sup> For simplicity reasons, I will indicate the subsample groups to which the cited interviewee belongs with the following abbreviations: P/P for poor with pregnancy experience in adolescence; P/NP for poor without pregnancy experience in adolescence; MC/P for middle-class with pregnancy experience in adolescence; MC/NP for middle-class without pregnancy experience in adolescence.

them, particularly when their partner works outside the house all day and they have no company during most of the day. Hence, a baby can serve as their company. This rationale is very strongly expressed among several poor women and shows how social isolation can also have a direct effect on childbearing decisions. For instance, V. explains how she desired a child to not be lonely anymore.

*V: No, because now I wanted to get pregnant, because I said I felt lonely, because he had started to work, I stayed alone during the day, then having a baby was like being accompanied, for instance, making his bottle, cuddle him ... (woman, P/P)*

Other interviewees clearly state company as the main motivator behind their planned pregnancies. While not a very dominant motive among the poor without pregnancy experience, loneliness is also mentioned among the drivers for having a child among this group. Poor women (both with and without pregnancy experience in adolescence) expressed clear preferences for early parenthood as opposed to it occurring at a later age. Several young women are very clear in stating that motherhood at a later stage in life is quite unattractive to them. “Being an old mother” means being less current, more distant from the child’s world and reality, not being able to play with them as much since one may lose the energy to do so, so went the arguments heard in the interviews.

An important and quite prominent motive mentioned among the interviewees was the partner strongly pushing for them to have a child (note: the Spanish expression “*tenerle un hijo*” they used translates as follows into English: “have him a child”). Partners pushing young women to get pregnant to show their virility has also been stated as a motive behind planned pregnancies in other research (Williamson et al., 2009). Relatedly, Voas (2003) shows that men and women in Sub-Sahara Africa often differ with regard to their fertility preferences, with women generally desiring lower fertility compared to men. The author argues that this is likely the case because women bear more of the costs associated with childbearing and childrearing. In this data, many young women mention their partners were the initiators in bringing up the idea of having a child and are (or have been) insisting on it, even when the women did not want to. This refers not only to having their first child, but there are also several reports of fathers wanting subsequent children earlier than the mother felt ready for it. Several interviewees who already have a child explain they wanted to postpone a subsequent pregnancy, but the partner would rather prefer to have it happen sooner. In some cases, partners keep insisting until the young women surrender to their partners request. For instance, M. did not want a second child either, but her partner insisted.

*M: And he would tell me - I want you to have me a child, have one for me - Until he convinced me. Then I told him - it's fine, I'm going to have it. (woman, P/P)*

In another case, a young woman has serious health conditions (high blood pressure), which is why her doctor advised her not to get pregnant again. However, the partner insists despite of the risks involved, and in the end, she gives in and follows his stated preference.

A possible explanation behind this behavior could be the association of fathering children as a signal of masculinity and accomplished manhood. As will be discussed in Chapter 10, men reported feeling more respected and perceived as full adults as a consequence of fatherhood. This is somewhat consistent with the voices of some mothers who also emphasize that maturity, adulthood, and becoming a ‘woman’ is deeply intertwined with motherhood. While sometimes women state they did not want the child as much as their partner wanted it, they may easily change their minds and let go of their own preferences to accommodate the preference of their partner. This happens particularly in those cases where the woman is either directly dependent or remarkably receptive for the attention or love from a man. In those cases, women may tend to exchange attention or love for fulfilling his wish (for a child in that case). The following example (a poor woman without pregnancy experience) is an exceptional case, but nonetheless worthwhile analyzing more in-depth because of the underlying mechanisms of power and exchange of favors. She met her partner in prison when visiting her brother there. While she did not want to have sex with him in the beginning, the special attention he was offering her made her change her mind. She received several gifts from him, which made her be more receptive for his requests. When she visited in prison, they were usually given some privacy for sexual relations. They used contraception, but soon, he started insisting on having a child. Similar to how he convinced her to have sexual relations, he was successful in convincing her of a child in common.

*I: He no longer protected himself, I was still using the injection, he would say: "I want a girl, I want a girl", that's how he continued.*

*Interviewer: He continued?*

*I: Yes, then he said that I was a bad person, that I didn't love him and he told me so many things so that I would only believe in getting pregnant. (woman, P/NP)*

This young poor woman who does not express any own wish or plan to have a child is being convinced to have a child with (or ‘for’ as the Spanish term insinuates as mentioned before) this man because of the attention and presents received—because she is being treated as someone special. She does what he asks for in exchange from her. She will have a child with him without thinking much more about the consequences and implications or evaluating carefully the advantages and disadvantages of making such a decision.

Finally, peer effects play an important role in shaping preferences and in adapting those to their own realities. Preferences of individuals adapt to what they observe in their surroundings as feasible options—both men’s and women’s choices are framed within their specific contexts. What they observe as available and possible for them will likely shape their preferences and aspirations. These adaptations of one’s preferences can have an impact on agency. In the absence of a real exercise of agency, there is no real choice either, but merely a “simulacrum of choice” (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 53). In line with that, what young adults observe in those other individuals that are closest to them will likely frame the way they start thinking about those issues and what they perceive as “normal,” as “desirable,” and as “rejectable.” Some young women are very

explicit about that process. For instance, several women cite observing and admiring pregnancy and motherhood in siblings, friends, and relatives prior to having their own baby.

In this context, it is also not surprising that the middle-class women in the study, on the other hand, never planned to be pregnant as teenagers and do not know anyone among their peers and acquaintances who would have done so. Teenage pregnancy is commonly not part of what they observe in their social networks and “does not make sense” in the context of the other options and common life paths they are exposed to. Their own reaction when learning about the pregnancy as well as the reaction of their peers and family are clear indicators that pregnancy is not something that commonly happens. It is a “tragedy,” as one of the middle-class interviewees said. Different from what is their observed ‘normal,’ it is unlikely someone from their social background would have the innate wish to have a child at that age and plan accordingly.

### 4.3 Postponing pregnancy

This section builds on interviews with the groups that did not have a child as teenagers (both poor and middle-class). A first and quite interesting finding is that the group of poor without pregnancy experience did not significantly postpone pregnancy after age 19. The recruitment criteria for the study only specified that informants should be poor, not older than 25 years old, and not have had a child before age 19. The local support that facilitated recruitment adhered very closely to these criteria. Hence, women who fulfilled these criteria were included, whether or not they had had a child meanwhile. Interestingly, the women recruited for the study under the category of poor without pregnancy experience as teenagers often went on to have children soon after they reached 19 years of age. Of those who did not have children by the time of the interview, only three stated clearly that they wanted to further postpone having a baby (one until 25, one until 26, and one until 27 years). Among those interviewees that were recruited for this group, the active postponing of pregnancy was not a common strategy. Even when asked directly about the idea, they were often rejecting it very strongly. One of the reasons for this was the sense that pregnancies at or around age 30 are dangerous. Another reason not to postpone pregnancy was the perceived difficulty in raising a child when the mother is older. A common perception was the increased health risks when having a child later in life. Furthermore, the duties related to bringing up a child would become more tiring, since older age was associated with lower energy levels.

Among the group of poor women without pregnancy experience, there are two references to postponing until after the woman herself would be professionally established. Similar to their middle-class peers, they refer to the importance of having specific conditions in place to offer to the child. Other than among these two examples, that conditionality for childbearing—very prevalent among the middle-class—is completely absent from the discourse of the poor women interviewed. Another condition that is mentioned by two of the poor young women is the need for own housing. It is clear that most young families live in arrangements of extended families

with parents, parents in law, siblings, or siblings in law. While certainly not always, this can sometimes be a major source of conflict and problematic relationships. Hence, the desire to have their own housing is a strong one also among those that already have a child. A few others refer to postponing second pregnancies to not compromise educational achievements. Another poor woman refers to the stability needed before having a child. Yet, in some other statements, these descriptions related to postponing pregnancies are not fully convincing and sometimes contradictory to other statements made in the same interview. For example, one young poor woman discusses the disadvantages her friend who had a child as a teenager is facing, while at the same time insisting that having a child is a “blessing” from God.

In contrast, all middle-class participants without a pregnancy experience emphasized their strategies to not have a baby now or in the near future. When asked why, answers ranged from “not feeling ready” to a need to feel “realized” by first achieving other goals which may be compromised by having a baby. The sense that conditionalities needed to be in place before a pregnancy would occur were very strong among these women and very clearly elaborated and thus thought through. In terms of age: almost all middle-class participants specify they want to postpone pregnancy until age 30. This is significantly beyond the desired age for motherhood cited by the poor. It is also very consistent with quantitative data that shows that the poor tend to not only have more children in total, but also have them earlier.<sup>67</sup>

The middle-class women elaborate on the fact that having a child earlier than they planned would have severe implications for their life plans overall. It may compromise their plans and interfere with competing objectives. This is very different from the poor: In the absence of competing plans, a child has literally nothing to interfere with. Heilborn and Cabral (2011) in their large-scale mixed-methods study in Brazil show that in a context of lack of female empowerment and lack of other opportunities to transition to adulthood other than by becoming a parent “the reproductive event does not interrupt careers” (p. 5). It just happens or is even intended to finalize the process of transition between one life phase to another. The authors similarly also emphasize social class related differences in the perception of ways to transition to adulthood. “This ideal conception of passage to adult life (including the completion of an education and the building of a professional career) ignores that the availability of social opportunities is not offered in equal conditions for youth of different social classes.” (Heilborn & Cabral, 2011, p. 2). Middle-class young women express very decisively their rejections of the possibility of an early pregnancy. Generally, the attitude with which middle-class young women (without a pregnancy experience) speak of the risk of getting pregnant is much more shaped by panic, fear, and worry if compared to the poor.

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<sup>67</sup> According to DHS data (2001), overall fertility rate was 5.6 among the lowest wealth quintile compared to 2.1 among the highest wealth quintile. Similarly, median births intervals in months was smaller among the lowest wealth quintile—29.1 months compared to 53.5 months among the highest. Median age at first birth was 18.2 years among the poorest quintile and 21.5 among the wealthiest.

The concerns of the middle-class regarding early pregnancy remind to certain extent the debates on (increasingly) individualistic values, particularly in Western Europe and North America. Those observed changes have important implications for changes in fertility decisions (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1990): A change in values was marked by a questioning of the intrinsic value almost uniformly put on family and children. The reason behind this questioning was (and continues being) centered around the accompanying restrictions these bring to a life that is focused on the needs and interests of an adult (Bertram, 1997). Related to that point are the perceived costs of parenthood and the potentially negative impacts on the freedom of planning one's own life. In certain social and cultural contexts women and men might perceive parenthood as constraining their independence and their options to choose from in life.

Economic opportunities for women in a society and acceptance of female professional careers are amongst the key issues commonly discussed related to fertility, particularly in western developed countries (Kreyenfeld, 2001). The relationship between women's labor force participation and the number of children is one of the key issues debated in relation to fertility. For instance, Butz and Ward (1979) show in a study for the U.S. how labor force participation and fertility are negatively correlated. The decision to have a child can lead women to step back from ambitious career plans (Emunds et al., 2003), even though it will have implications for the division of labor between partners (Fthenakis, 2002).<sup>68</sup>

In my sample, middle-class women clearly perceive a potential pregnancy as something that goes against their plans. This fear stimulates the taking of action to prevent this risk. Relatedly, inconsistency in contraceptive use is a rather rare phenomenon among their peers, according to the interviewees. In addition, they seem to be very aware of the costs an earlier than intended pregnancy would have for them. The participants articulation of the possible consequences in a clear and well-reflected manner serves as evidence that their motivation to take action and control to prevent a pregnancy may be much stronger than compared to the previous group. Participant U. explains clearly her reasoning for postponing a pregnancy which essentially would keep her from implementing her life plans:

*Interviewer: And when do you think it would be a good age to have a baby? What you think?*

*U: An age?*

*Interviewer: Yes.*

*U: Well, I would think after 25, at least I want to live by myself, I want to know what it is to live completely on my own, I want to enjoy my salary, I mean, if I want to buy a shirt for a thousand dollars I would be able to do it because it is only me depending on my money, I want to feel that independence and also prepare myself, I*

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<sup>68</sup> While generally the costs of parenthood are higher for women, they can be mitigated by economic, institutional, and cultural factors of certain societies: Besides the role of family support, access to services that facilitate the conciliation of family and career including availability and affordability of child care and/or financial support to families also plays into women's and men's decision whether, when and how many children to have. But family policies vary heavily with context (Hülkamp, 2005).

*mean, imagine if I'm going to study a master's degree, I cannot go to a master's degree with a child and spend two years out of the country – with whom am I going to leave the child, so, then, better after 25. (woman, MC/NP)*

She is very clear that right now would not be a good moment to have a child because she is not 'prepared.' This concept of preparedness as referred to by her (and other middle-class informants) is interesting since it brings along the idea of a set of conditionalities to be in place before having a child. Several participants specifically refer to the lack of economic and emotional preparedness.

*J: Because ... I do not want a baby, because first I am not prepared to have a baby, I mean, neither economically nor emotionally at all, not in any circumstance and also - even if it sounds ugly - people always tell you, and I see it because I know women who have been pregnant at my age who say that a child is a blessing, but I believe that the blessing depends on the age, at least right now I do not see a child as a blessing because I want to travel, I want to get to know things, go and see, I want to do things that maybe a child will not allow me to do, because I will no longer be thinking only about myself but about him or her because I will be the one who will have to respond, so I do not want a baby because I want to live my life and then after that I will live my life with the child when I am ready. (woman, MC/NP)*

Another term used quite often by interviewees from this group is: "feeling realized/accomplished"<sup>69</sup>. And one woman from that group argues concretely:

*V: Having fulfilled the dreams or the goals that I have, because I do not want a child to get in the way. (woman, MC/NP)*

The overall concept of what they understand as being prepared well enough is described by the middle-class participants as self-realization, independence, and autonomy—expressions that do not figure among the explanations of the poor interviewees. The presence of these ideas and concepts and what they imply is an interesting differential. The middle-class women have a clear concept of being independent and autonomous. They see autonomy as an objective in itself and as a possibility. The absence of these concepts in the discourse of (almost all) the poor is revealing. Independence, freedom, autonomy, self-realization, and achievement do not figure among their imaginary realities let alone their actual realities. For some other middle-class interviewees, having children is not a necessity either. While, again, this is not a representative sample and the middle-class sample was particularly small, it still is consistent with the other findings that motherhood is not a core objective for middle-class women, while it definitely is one for the poor women without children.

When elaborating on strategies for postponing a pregnancy, middle-class women unanimously refer to contraception. In contrast, abstinence is a common strategy amongst poor women who

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<sup>69</sup> In the original citation: "*sentirme realizada*".



tried to postpone. At the same time: This is certainly a less effective means to control one's fertility. Abstinence-only programs have shown little effect on teenage pregnancy (Corcoran, O'Dell Miller, & Bultman, 1997; Kirby, 2001; Manlove, 2002). Similarly, in the United States, a 2007 analysis of data from the 1995 and 2002 cycles of the National Survey of Family Growth showed that the vast majority of a decline in teenage pregnancy—86 percent—was the result of improved use of contraceptives. The remaining 14 percent could be attributed to a decrease in sexual activity (Underhill, Montgomery, & Operario, 2007; Kirby, 2008).

#### 4.4 The option of abortion

Access to safe abortion expands a woman's capability for choice and decision-making—over her body, but more broadly over her life, since having an unplanned or unwanted child may have negative implications for her future. In Latin America and the Caribbean, abortion is illegal in almost every country (Center for Reproductive Rights, access 2017).<sup>70</sup> The vast majority of women in this region live in countries with very restrictive abortion laws, meaning abortion is not permitted under any circumstances or only under certain conditions in some countries (such as the life of the mother would be threatened). Nicaragua is one of the few countries in the world that ban abortion under all circumstances. At the same time, the country has not yet made international publicity for its prosecution of women who pursue an abortion, as recently occurring in its neighboring country El Salvador.<sup>71</sup> In this context of illegality of abortion, it is almost impossible to have good data and evidence on the incidence and consequences of abortion. Moreover, even when abortion may not be restricted legally, access to it may still be hampered by a number of reasons (including limitations on state and federal funding of abortion, an increase in the distance women must travel to find an abortion provider, a lack of willingness of health staff to perform abortions, social stigmatization, lack of awareness and knowledge among women, etc.). At the same time, within countries, access to abortion may also differ when comparing socio-economic groups. As has been noted in the Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995): “Unsafe abortions threaten the lives of a large number of women, representing a grave public health problem as it is primarily the poorest and youngest who take the highest risk” (UN, 1996, p. 36).

Progressive laws on abortion have the potential to save a woman's life in cases where a pregnancy puts a woman's life at risk. Furthermore, legalized abortion (and effective access to it) minimizes the risk of maternal deaths due to unsafe procedures (Klugman et al., 2014). Unsafe abortions are procedures to terminate pregnancies which may be undertaken in conditions that do not conform to minimum medical standards or that are performed by someone who does not have

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<sup>70</sup> <http://worldabortionlaws.com/map/>

<sup>71</sup> See for instance: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/07/el-salvador-rape-survivor-sentenced-to-30-years-in-jail-under-extreme-anti-abortion-law/> and <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-latin-america-32491838/el-salvador-women-jailed-for-miscarriages> (Access September 2017)

proper skills or training (WHO, 1992). Evidence from South Africa shows that the legalization of abortion led to measurable declines in abortion-related mortality (Jewkes & Rees, 2005). Similarly, Benson, Andersen, and Samandari (2011) provide evidence that legalization in Bangladesh, Romania and South Africa led to decreased abortion-related mortality.<sup>72</sup> While certainly the mortality rate from unsafe abortions is also related to the general level of health care and the availability of care after abortions were conducted, mortality still remains the highest in countries where abortion is legally restricted (Berer, 2004). In Latin America, for instance, unsafe abortion is estimated to account for 17 percent of all maternal deaths (which is above the estimations for the worldwide shares on average, 13 percent, Grimes et al., 2006). Berer (2004) shows that unsafe abortion and related mortality are both highest where legal abortion does not exist or exists with significant restrictions only (Berer, 2004).

Since abortion is illegal in Nicaragua and the topic is very sensitive, no direct questions were asked during interviews with regard to the issue. Some young women referred to it regardless. Some mention they had considered an abortion themselves at some point during their pregnancy. However, all of these women were reluctant to take action. Most of the related explanations refer to guilt and feeling that this was not the right action to take. Others were uncertain about the possible consequences to their health, with some specifically mentioning their fear of becoming infertile afterwards. Some (poor with and without pregnancy experiences) also report that after considering an abortion, they were facing significant resistance by family members or partners, which made it impossible for them to pursue it. Interestingly though, none of the women referred to having completed an abortion themselves. In two cases (both poor with pregnancy experience), family or others brought up the option of abortion, but the young women themselves were not in favor. Participant E. for instance is advised to terminate the pregnancy by her mother, who opposes the idea of her daughter having a child that young:

*Interviewer: Did she support you?*

*E: No. My mom wanted me to have an abortion.*

*Interviewer: And did you want an abortion?*

*E: No, because I told her I did not want to get pregnant, but I do not want to abort either, because my conscience would never be calm. (woman, P/P)*

Both young women decide against the advice they received and continue their pregnancies. They state their conscience would not “be calm.” Generally, the vast majority of the poor (those who had and those who did not have a baby) expressed the opinion that an abortion is a taboo. The main reason for this assessment was that abortion is perceived to be a selfish choice. Most of those who had not planned their pregnancies said they never considered abortion regardless, because they thought they had to take the responsibility for the consequences for their own actions. The link between religious (specifically Christian) values and such statements is very

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<sup>72</sup> Consequently, changes in abortion access, making it more difficult to have a safe abortion, deteriorates women’s health (Grimes et al., 2006).

evident here. Young women also described they had to ‘pay for their sins’: once they engaged in premarital sex, they committed a sin. If the result of that sin was a child, there ‘should’ not be a way out of paying for the sin—they had to take it on and deal with what they deserved. It is quite notable thus, that while in that context the informants often speak about a child being a “present” from God, what they are de facto describing is a ‘punishment’ for committing a sin they have to accept.

Resistance by the partner was also the motive for dropping the idea in one other case of a poor woman with pregnancy experience, in which her partner threatened to report her to the police should she pursue an abortion. Finally, health workers are also cited as influential stakeholders in the decision-making on whether or not to consider an abortion. In this sample, health workers were reported to have done both: advised in favor of and against an abortion. For example, in one of the middle-class women’s cases (without pregnancy experience), her gynecologist suggested to not abort, given the negative health implications of an abortion as well as the risk of suffering psychological trauma.

Similarly, abortion is not portrayed as a real option in the interviews with fathers. The few men who talk about it do so by emphasizing the idea that they would never have considered it because of moral concerns. They also argue similarly to the interviewed women that after one finds out about a pregnancy, one has to be ‘responsible.’ Being ‘responsible’ implicitly means having the child and taking care of the child in the best way possible. In the views of most interviewees, deciding not to have the child would be irresponsible and an inappropriate and unacceptable reaction. Some specifically refer to ‘moral and religious’ obligations and motives. Only one informant in the data, a 25-year-old man who has a five-year-old son and lives separated from the mother of his son, reported an attempted but unsafe abortion, which led to birth defects for his baby.

*J: After that this gangster (note: the mother of the baby) liked to hit her belly, it got to a point in which she wanted to get rid of the girl, she wanted to have an abortion, she did a few things so that when my daughter was born, she was born with problems, because of these things that she (note: the mother) wanted to do. (father)*

While this experience is merely portrayed from the perspective of the father, it becomes clear that the mother of the baby pursued an unsafe way of aborting, resulting in health-related implications for her baby. While not further elaborated from these descriptions, it is not unlikely that the young woman acted as she did due to the lack of access to safe abortions in the country. Interestingly, the views on abortion are quite similar across three of the interviewed groups: poor with pregnancy experience, poor without pregnancy experience, and middle-class with pregnancy experience. Among those who had a baby, two middle-class women refer to the option of an abortion as something they quickly disregarded as a possible option despite related suggestions from partners or family members.

*H: It was my decision to start having promiscuous relationships and I was not going to have an abortion when at the same time I had the freedom to decide to have sex. It is not right. He did not suggest it to me either, my dad suggested it. (woman, MC/P)*

This result, that the middle-class participants would react in the same way is not completely unexpected. Access to abortion is usually easier for the middle-class, particularly in contexts where abortion is illegal. Hence, those middle-class participants who were recruited for the study as having had a child before age 19 are likely those who consciously decided against abortion. However, even among the middle-class without pregnancy experience, there is one case of rather hesitant attitudes towards the subject matter: For instance, participant V. explains how she had thought one time she was pregnant, which she describes as a ‘horrible’ experience. While thinking through the several negative implications of a pregnancy at that moment, she was evaluating the option to abort or not and says she was very afraid to potentially become sterile and to not be able to live with the conscience of having had an abortion. Interestingly though, this interviewee is an exception among the group of middle-class women without pregnancy experience. Other middle-class women without children say that abortion would be an option if they were to become pregnant. One also reports on the concrete experience among her friends. While she doesn’t know any specifics or details, she does know that the friend had to pay a very high price for the procedure, insinuating once more that access to safe (illegal) abortion is an option for the middle-class rather than for the poor.

Overall, middle-class participants without pregnancy are more open towards abortion as an option. It also reflects the likelihood of better access to (illegal) abortion given their higher income level and hence, means to compensate health staff for the procedure. Different studies have shown that young women in the poorest areas are less likely to use abortion to resolve unplanned pregnancies (Griffiths & Kirby, 2000; Smith, 1993; Heilborn & Cabral, 2011). Ashcraft and Lang (2006) show that teenage mothers who choose abortion are likely to come from more privileged background (see also: Menezes, Aquino, & Da Silva, 2006). Research also documents differences in attitudes to abortion when comparing social groups. Tabberer et al. (2000) show that young women in communities where teenage motherhood is prevalent have been found to hold anti-abortion views, and they may be influenced by the anti-abortion views of others in their neighborhoods. Similar results have been found by Arai (2003) in her qualitative study on teenage motherhood in diverse English communities.<sup>73</sup>

## 4.5 Letting it happen – no decision-making for or against motherhood

So far, two types of decision-making around pregnancy have been discussed: One group of women in the study sample, all of them poor, decided consciously to have a baby during their

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<sup>73</sup> For Nicaragua, some key informants shared their views that attitudes towards abortion seem to differ when comparing poor and middle-class Nicaraguans with middle-class individuals usually tending to be more open towards abortion compared to the poor.

teenage years. Another group, almost exclusively middle-class, actively sought to postpone having a child until later in life. Abortion, while discussed previously, was not a decision made by any of the interviewees. However, the vast majority of the poor interviewees find themselves in a third group: they did not decide to have a child, but they took no steps to avoid a pregnancy either. There are multiple explanations behind this last behavior. Some young women lacked the capacity to negotiate with the partner, as they depended on him and lacked the power to influence him. Others did not realize the risk of having unprotected sex, and some were simply not thinking about the immediate and not-so-immediate implications of their actions—not to mention the mid-term implications of their behavior. Feelings of guilt prevented some girls from getting contraceptives before engaging in sex. Many also did not have an expressed opinion or plan and felt ambiguous about using contraceptives. Only two mothers among the poor with pregnancy experience stated that the main issue, which hindered them from preventing their unplanned pregnancy, was their lack of access to contraception and incomplete knowledge about contraception or where to get it.

*Interviewer: And at the age of 15 did you know any method of contraception, did you know about condom use?*  
*A: Well, I listened, I did not know, I just heard there were condoms, but I did not know how or where to buy them, or how I was going to use them ... We never protected ourselves because I did not have that knowledge.*  
*(woman, P/P)*

Participant V. (a poor woman with pregnancy experience) tells a similar story: she did not know about contraception. She never talked about it with her partner and they never used any form of contraception. He was 18 years old then, she was only 13 years old when she got pregnant. Overall, even if it is not the main barrier in all but those two cases, a lack of knowledge can be identified as an influencing factor only in very few cases it seems. Some shared misconceptions, such as the belief that a pregnancy would never result from one-time sex, but that one needed to accumulate a certain number of sexual encounters to be able to conceive. Relatedly, the lack of knowledge leaves some women to speculate that contraception causes severe damage to their health. The fear that it could impact them negatively keeps them from using any. At the same time, the fact that the risk from using contraceptives is perceived larger compared to the one of having a baby implies that the consequences from having a baby are not perceived as too negative either. This thinking indicates lack of access to quality information and also, the low perceived costs of pregnancy. However, overall, knowledge seems to not be the central barrier to contraceptive use.

A high share among the young women refer to contraceptive failure as the reason for their unplanned pregnancy. Several women, for instance, claim they used injections, IUDs or the pill and got pregnant in spite of those. However, it has to be noted that it is very unlikely that

contraceptives fail when used correctly.<sup>74</sup> Thus, one interpretation is that the feeling of guilt may lead them to claim it was essentially an accident due to unfortunate circumstances. Another possible explanation is that they are simply not aware of correct usage. The most likely explanation, however, is that the plan to avoid a possible pregnancy was not extremely important at that moment and thus, not top of mind, and thus resulting in inconsistencies in usage. Generally, most of the interviewees in this group do not seem to have had concrete thoughts and fears of getting pregnant before doing so. These interviewees seem to be rather ambivalent around the moment when their pregnancies occurred. They were not completely opposed to the idea of having a child. These reports resonate very much with the stories Edin and Kefalas (2005) find in poor Philadelphia communities. As a result of their ethnographic research, the authors note that unplanned children are not necessarily unwanted.

When describing the circumstances of getting pregnant, the poor describe relationships and situations in which they were lacking any type of control. Some women simply do not take action to prevent it, often because their partners assure them everything will be fine if a pregnancy were to occur. See, for instance, the following young woman's story who met the father of her baby in school (she was 15 years old, he was 18). About three to four months after starting to date him she got pregnant. She did not take measures to prevent the pregnancy:

*Interviewer: Did you ever talk about a pregnancy?*

*B: Yes, like three times I told him that no. And he said that since we had already had intercourse before, that better not to, but that if I was gonna get pregnant that he would assume it. (woman, P/P)*

Her story exemplifies the passive role some of these young women play in this important decision for their lives. Indeed, it also shows that she did not take a rational decision, she did not carefully balance her options and weighing the consequences of those. Many participants describe the pregnancy as something that merely 'happened' to them. The influencers, determinants, and critical moments that all led to this certainly important life event remains untold, possibly even un-reflected. Most of the time, they do not seem to have had a clearly stated, reflected, and pursued attitude towards whether or not to get pregnant at that moment. Several women express ambiguity in their own attitudes towards pregnancy at that moment when it occurred. Similarly, the following woman explains how she would have accepted whether or not she got pregnant at the time—whatever the outcome, she would have handled it. She not only lacked a stated preference at the moment, but she also refused to pursue one clear direction—in favor of or

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<sup>74</sup> CDC shows that effectiveness of different birth control methods varies significantly when comparing perfect with "typical" use. Effectiveness in "typical use" shows how effective the method is during actual use (including inconsistent and incorrect use). According to that data, contraceptive failure (measured in share of women who experience an unintended pregnancy within the first year of typical use of each contraceptive method) varies: 18 percent for male condoms, 9 percent for pill, 6 percent for injections and 0.8 percent for copper IUDs. Interestingly, these significant divergences from 'perfect use' failure rates increase with the need for 'action' to be taken consistently by the individual (see at: [https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/contraception/unintendedpregnancy/pdf/Contraceptive\\_methods\\_508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/contraception/unintendedpregnancy/pdf/Contraceptive_methods_508.pdf))

against pregnancy. She did not take any concrete and conscious steps in any specific direction (such as using contraception or planning a pregnancy actively).

*Interviewer: Why?*

*D: Because ... partly, because the injections were draining me. They were draining me but on the other hand, because if I would get pregnant, I would get pregnant. That was it. (Laughter)*

*Interviewer: But did you not want that? It was like that, that you wanted, you wanted a baby.*

*D: Yes, if it would happen, well, welcome. If I would not get pregnant, I would not get pregnant. (woman, P/P)*

And along the same lines, the following woman who does not have a child yet anticipates how she would react if it happened:

*S: Yes, we have spoken (Note: about the possibility of having a child), he thinks that it is not the moment, but if it happens, well ... (woman, P/NP)*

At the same time, their handling of the pregnancy event is very similar to their overall attitudes towards life and their roles and paths in it. Pregnancy and having a child is just one more life dimension in which they are passive observers and not active drivers. Their overall lack of decision-making capacity is also reflected in decisions on whether or not to have sex, pursue their education, build a career, or explore opportunities outside their communities. Thus, pregnancy as a central life event is not an exception, but in line with the overall lack of control over life planning and life decisions. The poor girls' lack of power and decision-making capacity is strongly reflected in sexual relations—whether or not, how, and when they happen is not something they control. They react to the decisions taken by their partners. Several young women express how their first sex occurred after moving in with the partner, and without them having much say in it (see Chapter 7). Other young women, when talking about how they got pregnant, state that they were acting spontaneously in that specific moment when the pregnancy occurred. They had not planned sexual activity (and less so a pregnancy)—it just happened. While similar to the above-mentioned women, who seem to lack control over their lives in a broader sense, this group, while possibly in the same situations, seem to lack control (and the willingness to exercise control) in a very specific moment in time. It remains unclear whether this behavior constitutes an exception or a common pattern among them. Participant D. (poor with pregnancy experience) explains how she and her boyfriend had sex twice, it was spontaneous, they did not think it through well, and they did not talk about it either. Another participant raises an interesting point: She suggests that she did not actually 'decide' to have sex. Deciding involves reflecting and considering implications of said decision. She did not decide in that sense, and she did not consider options.

*C: No. Actually. (Laughter) Seeing this as a decision, a decision, no. Because a decision, I understand it as something that you think about first and then you get to 'yes, I will do it' or 'I will not do it'. It was something, like spontaneous. Neither he thought about it, nor did I. When I looked, we were already ... (Laughter) Yes. (woman, P/P)*

Relatedly, others express that they had not conceived the risk to get pregnant as real or serious. They simply did not think about what may follow their actions in that moment. They had not fully imagined what unprotected sex implied concretely and more generally for their lives. One of the participants explains the lack of responsibility in adolescence in the context of a broader lack of reflection, evaluation of risks, thoughtfulness, as follows:

*Interviewer: Did you not have an idea about contraceptives?*

*O: Yes, in fact it was something like that ... I do not know, sometimes young people or teenagers we tend to be irresponsible. We believe that we are immortal and that nothing will happen to us and we leave everything aside. (woman, P/P)*

This quote describes the lack of considering the implications of actions taken today. It also stresses the idea that adolescents are generally very optimistic (almost naively so) and do not sufficiently protect themselves against things that may harm them. While rational planning for the mid-term or even long-term is not common in adolescence, this absence of considering the consequences is exacerbated in situations of extreme poverty: “On top of the other material challenges poverty brings, it also brings a mental one (...) Under these conditions, we all would have (and have!) failed” (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 161). If individuals do not identify ways to change the course of their lives anyway, if they see no options to choose from and no possibilities to make a difference in what has been prepared for them, then the likelihood of carefully thinking about implications for one’s future become even less. One participant’s story serves as an insightful example for this argument. At the age of eleven, she met a young man who used drugs, she considered him her husband, and they both went on to use drugs, and lived in the streets. She explains how she had no interest in actively taking control over her own life despite the efforts of the NGO she was in contact with. She was just thinking in the moment.

Some of the young women in the sample who already have a child state they were using some form of contraceptives at the time when they got pregnant, indicating they had a preference to not get pregnant at that moment. However, they admit their use was inconsistent. This constitutes a clear reflection of the absence of a strong opposition to pregnancy. While not a conscious strategy, here, the absence of other opportunities that a pregnancy and a child would interfere with lowers the urgency to secure these other opportunities and ensure they can get fulfilled. Heilborn and Cabral (2011) find similar patterns in Brazil. In the context of poverty and in an absence of opportunities, pregnancy just happens and doesn’t interrupt other plans. Similar to the women, the young men interviewed explain that contraceptive use was very irregular in their relationships before the pregnancy. When probed as to why they did not use contraceptives or only inconsistently so, fathers overwhelmingly point to not ‘liking’ condoms, while not necessarily discussing other forms of contraception.

*Interviewer: And what about the sexual relationship with your daughter's mom, how did it start?*

*J: Kisses, hugs, once I told her to come to the house and there the things happened.*

*Interviewer: And did you use contraceptives at any time?*



*J: No, I used nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, pure skin, pure flesh (laughs)*

*Interviewer: Did you not use any because you didn't know, or by decision?*

*J: By decision. (father)*

Some suggest that in the 'heat of the moment,' one does not think about the consequences.

*Interviewer: And did you think about the possibility of getting pregnant?*

*K: You know that sometimes, when you are in the moment you do not care, yes, we thought about it, but already in the ... There is no, there is no, anyways. (father)*

At the same time, it remains unclear why other means of contraception were not considered as an alternative to condoms. This is a very strong indication of the absence of a strong urge to prevent pregnancy, similar to the observed pattern among the women interviewed.

Interestingly, there are several examples in the data that show that unplanned pregnancies may occur multiple and consecutive times. As mentioned earlier, median births intervals differ between the poor and the richer groups (29.1 months in the lowest wealth quintile compared to 53.5 months, data for 2001, ENDESA). While some of the interviewees stated the experience had been 'teaching,' and they realized how hard raising a child was only after having had one, several others keep the behavioral patterns even after a first unplanned pregnancy. In other cases, when asked about their future plans, several state they are not planning for another child, but that they would accept it if it were to happen (similar to those that do not yet have a child). Sometimes these consecutive pregnancies occur with different partners, and in other cases, the same couple has more than one unplanned child.

*Interviewer: How old were you then?*

*Y: 15 years old ... Yes, how should I tell you: I knew, but I lived my life to live it, I listened, it came in here and there it came out ... And with him too ... I imagine it was the same for him, because he did not think about it either, he told me: "Look, let's go use contraceptives", nothing, nothing, we only lived life as it was happening ...*

*Interviewer: And this is how you had the other child?*

*Y: That's how I had the other child, I was 16 or 17, 16 I think ... I think I was 16, because the child right now is 11 years old.*

*Interviewer: And the other two children are from the same dad?*

*Y: No, they are from someone else. (woman, P/P)*

Finally, there are also a number of cases among the poor with pregnancy experience in which the young woman is living with a man in complete dependency and cannot make any decisions herself. In many cases, this extreme form of dependency they find themselves in is caused by their parents throwing them out of the house when they learn about the pregnancy or the relationship the young women are involved in. Without a complete and quality education, without work experience, and importantly, without any social networks, their only option is to stay with the partner they are involved with. Participant M. for instance, met the father of her first child in

a finca that her grandmother took care of. While she did not have sexual relations with this man at the beginning, she was pushed into moving in with him when her grandmother learned about the relationship and subsequently, threw her out of the house. The price young women like M. pay for that “*refugio*” (English: refuge) she refers to is usually giving up any decision-making regarding their sexuality as well as regarding their overall life planning. The decision-making capacity within these couples (when girls have no other option but to live with that partner because they are rejected by their families of origin) are described as very imbalanced with men essentially controlling most of the decisions. E. reports a story with similar consequences.

*E: It was one night that I stayed on the street. I woke up in the street, my mom had gone to Catarina and my sister told my mom that I had been up with this boyfriend and she started telling me that if I had had something with him that I would have to leave the house, that I would have to go with him (cries).*

*Interviewer: Did you leave the house?*

*E: Yes, I left the house, because she did not believe me (cries), then he came to talk to her to explain that nothing had happened, then she said no, she was fixated on this thing that we had had sex, so I went with him.*

*Interviewer: Was it the only option you had?*

*E: Yes. He took me and told me he was going to try to talk to my mom, but he did not change her position. (woman, P/P)*

Overall, the vast majority of the poor did not exhibit strong motivations to avoid a pregnancy, despite saying they did not want to become pregnant. Despite having the necessary information (with very few exceptions as stated above) and means (access to means to prevent a pregnancy was theoretically possible), most young women just “let it happen.” They did not take any action to avoid the pregnancy. The passivity with which the girls accept how their lives unfold is a clear reflection of the lack of agency. Their having unprotected sex underlines that they do not exercise substantive control over their actions and decisions, whether in the immediate or the medium term. Reflective of this acceptance and passivity is the insinuation that God sent the baby. Generally, those that do refer somehow to postponing pregnancy do not strongly signal their will to do so. Similar to one of the previously quoted women, there are several others who bring up the argument of a child being a ‘blessing,’ independent at which time it may arrive throughout the interview.

*Interviewer: And have you talked to your partner about that? Because there is always a risk, how did he react?*

*N: Yes, I have spoken with him, he reacted normally, although now both he and I do not want a baby, but if it happens then it is something from God, he knows why things happen. (woman, NP/P)*

This is not only a reference to God but furthermore, it is an implicit reference to values that prescribe two essential and normative concepts prevalent among most of the poor interviewed for this study. First, a child is a present from God, and second, if a pregnancy happens, there is only ‘so much one can do.’ Certainly, abortion or taking control after the pregnancy occurred is not an option, according to these values. Second, the overall reference to life being in God’s hands and the vision that God is determining what happens to someone represent a clear

reflection that individuals do not think of themselves as being the ones in control. Life happens - not because we decide certain things or make plans and act on them. Life happens in the ways that has already been planned by the 'Almighty.' That term often used to substitute the word God is indicative of that hypothesis. Some interviewees even indicate they want to control their fertility and take control over when and in which conditions to have a child, but then stress that this may not be possible because their own plan may not "coincide with God's plan." Independent of their stated attitudes towards pregnancy before conceiving, one finds that the poor who became mothers expressed a fatalistic view once they found out about their pregnancies. They interpret the positive pregnancy result as a decision made for them. Becoming pregnant meant that they were supposed to become mothers and take care of their children. This decision though was not taken by them. This is interesting since it shows that they do not feel completely in control over their life outcomes, nor do they revolt to that feeling of being out of control. Their explanations read like they are accepting their 'fate.' The multiple references to God's will and God's gift—to children being a blessing—are clear indications of the fatalistic views typical in Latin American Catholicism and the 'providencialismo' criticized by Perez-Baltodano (2007). 'Providencialismo' (or the reliance on providence) is reflected here when these young women see no possibility, and moreover, no point in interfering with this fate. They have to be receptive and make the best out of the situation (see further discussion in Chapter 7.5).

Overall, and going back to the original analysis of the different types of decision-making processes, these findings underline limitations with regard to a binary conception of fertility decision-making. Other authors have pointed to this idea that fertility decision-making happens much less rationally and consciously than often discussed in policy and research. Michaels (1998), for instance, points out strong motivation to have a child can exist in the subjective experience of an adolescent who does not make a deliberate decision to have a child. Similarly, Dash (1989) finds that young mothers may initially say they were very upset to find themselves pregnant, but then later on, with a relationship of trust built with the interviewer, concede that they were actually happy about having a baby. Along these lines, in my study, the majority of women seem to find themselves in the in-between space of not intending, but not avoiding either.

Acceptance and passivity is not only prevalent among the poor with pregnancy experience group, but also a quite common theme among the group of poor without pregnancy experience. Actually, among this group, when forward looking, this accepting and passive attitude is also the most prevalent one. In fact, both groups show similar levels of ambivalence about pregnancy. One participant (poor and without pregnancy experience) talks about having another baby with her boyfriend and claims she does not want one, but if it were to happen, it would happen.

*E: Noooo. I said, if I get pregnant, I get pregnant, well well. (woman, P/NP)*

There are a few more women that express the exact same lack of clarity in their own position towards a first or consecutive pregnancy. In line with that, the study also finds that currently, contraceptive use is very inconsistent among a significant share of poor without pregnancy

experience. In general, this group's statements regarding past pregnancies or future perspectives on having a baby are similarly vague and ambiguous as those of the poor with pregnancy experience when describing the circumstances of their pregnancies. Looking back, some share very similar stories as the poor with pregnancy experience of contraceptive failures or inconsistent use of contraceptives. None of the middle-class participants with pregnancy experience actively prevented pregnancy despite knowledge about how to do so. In all of those cases, participants state that the pregnancy occurred because they were acting in the moment, spontaneously, and without considering implications for the future. Participant H. (MC/P) explains acting with a lack of thinking in the moment and with impulses caused by hormones.

*Interviewer: How did you decide to have sex? Did you decide together?*

*H: It was a decision driven by the hormones of that age and the circumstances, because I did not stop to think I was going to do it. It was something that happened. (woman, MC/P)*

Importantly though, accident is a very present word in these reports, used multiple times by the middle-class participants with pregnancy experiences. Interestingly, it rarely appears in the interviews of the poor. The term 'accident' carries a negative connotation though, it was clearly unintended and certainly momentous.

## 4.6 Discussion

Ortega Hegg shows in UNFPA (1999) that two opposite mentalities persist in the Nicaraguan society. One involves traditional religiosity with an overall passivity towards life and assumptions that life's outcomes are a matter of God's will. The other takes a more analytical vision of the world, favoring the idea of individual autonomy. This concept of life does not only distinguish itself from the previous one by overall more progressive attitudes, but also by more egalitarian gender attitudes. The division between these two groups cuts relatively closely along socio-economic levels. According to Hegg (1999), this is a very important point since it clearly points towards the findings of this study. 15 years after Hegg's research, I similarly find that the first view of the world as described above is quite common among poor women and the second one is more prevalent among more wealthy groups. While traditional ways of thinking and seeing the world may persist among some groups, the Nicaraguan revolution accelerated the process of transition for some groups according to key informants. Hegg's research concluded that the generalization of a youth or adolescent culture would be misleading: "The culture of adolescence in Nicaragua is distinguished and stratified more according to social conditions than according to gender or even place of residence. This finding indicates the need to elaborate differentiated strategies to work with adolescents based on social strata, rather than on the usual rural/urban distinction" (Engl. translation, see original below<sup>75</sup>) (UNFPA, 1999, p. 8). The important overall

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<sup>75</sup> Spanish original: "la cultura de la adolescencia en Nicaragua se distingue y estratifica mas según las condiciones sociales que según el género o incluso el lugar de residencia. Este hallazgo indica la necesidad de elaborar estrategias

takeaway is that Nicaraguan society seems to be a fragmented culture, with some very traditional elements and some new ones being incorporated into the mainstream culture. In addition, key informants clarify that there are differences in mentalities when comparing the urban with the rural middle-classes. Catholicism and traditional values seem to be more persistent in rural areas, including among the middle-class. In contrast, the middle-class in Managua is marked by multicultural influences, access to quality higher education, and exposure to (or even involvement with) the women's movement. According to key informants, many of the young people in Managua's middle-class are children of parents who actively participated in the revolution. The revolution and its search for equality profoundly marked the experiences of the parent generation and gets conveyed to their children, so the informants.

This research clearly shows that, in the decision-making process on adolescent childbearing, differences are much more pronounced between different socio-economic groups than among members of the same socio-economic groups. This suggests that structural factors may be more important in explaining early pregnancy than those relating to sexual knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. The differences between the poor and the middle-class seem to indicate inequality in economic and educational opportunities and the related capacity to control and plan one's life. A related, important point is that fertility decision-making does not only differ between socio-economic groups. Poor women seem to be lacking control and decision-making capacity more broadly. They do not have the capacity to fully decide over their bodies, and in addition, this lack of decision-making capacity entails many more dimensions of life and is related to their overall disempowerment. Along those same lines, the World Development Report 2000/2001 found that poverty meant lack of freedom of choice and action and lack of power to control one's life. These young women in my sample are not only poor though (and thus lack decision-making capacity because of their poverty status). They are also women, and thus, they are additionally disempowered because of their gender condition. Both factors (poverty and gender) seem to be the key drivers behind the phenomenon, as will be seen throughout the study. On the other hand, middle-class informants make different decisions, and they make them differently. The young women from this group seem to have more say in all sorts of different aspects of life. It also becomes clear (and will be further analyzed later on) that they can decide and choose from different options. They do not opt for motherhood given their access to other possibilities. At the stage they are at, founding a family is not their main purpose; they have other priorities reflecting the diversity of possible roles and activities for women. Key informants emphasized that the concept of life plans does not make sense in the context of poverty where people's focus is more shortsighted and the objectives more closely related to actual survival. In contrast, the middle-class can afford to "think a future," as one of the informants put it, following a pre-elaborated construct.

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diferenciadas de trabajo con adolescentes basadas en los estratos sociales, más que en la usual distinción rural/urbana" (see citation above).

This chapter was dedicated to portraying the different types of decision-making that emerge from the data. The following ones will be dedicated to analyzing the drivers behind these processes and the factors that play in.

## 5 Agency, aspirations, and identity development – how structure matters

This chapter will provide the theoretical foundations for this work. Girls' agency and decision-making capacity stands at the center of this research project. Hence, I will first discuss findings from previous literature on factors that influence decision-making around fertility. Further, I will introduce the concept of agency and why it provides an important reference for the main research topic. Since decisions around fertility are always entrenched in a context in which other choices for one's future also happen (either simultaneously or sequentially), the literature on identity development, and specifically, on identity development during adolescence and in the transition to adulthood will also be presented in this chapter. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion on why and how structure and context substantially shape the formation of both, agency and identity development. This last point will lay a fundamental path towards the findings from the qualitative data collected which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

### 5.1 A focus on the process of decision-making

As stated earlier, the focus of this research will be on the decision-making and the decision-making processes around adolescent motherhood among poor and middle-class women in Nicaragua, as well as their partners. Having a child or not and at which moment in life is one of the crucial decisions in one's life project. A large portion of (economic) literature on fertility has been built upon a view that fertility decision-making is based on rational choice, following the seminal paper by Becker (1960). Rational-choice models assume that behavior is determined by the mix of incentives faced by the decision maker. In the case of fertility decisions, this translates into a model in which potential parents choose the quantity and timing of their children based on cost-price and utility evaluations. Unlike economic research on fertility decisions, which assumes rational decision-making based on a cost and benefit analysis, sociological literature has identified multiple overlapping intangible factors that play into fertility decision-making.

First of all, social norms and what they define to be acceptable and not acceptable are essential to understand the context in which decisions are made. For instance, perceptions of women's and men's role in society and within the home have an impact on how individuals perceive themselves, imagine themselves in the future, and construct their life goals. Similarly, the deeper meaning and value placed on motherhood in a society, or in a certain subgroup, might have a very strong impact on questions of if, when, and how women decide to have children. While in some contexts it might be acceptable and even desired to sequentially balance career and family, in others that may not be the case. Furthermore, other individual characteristics of the mother may play an important role in the decision-making. Education levels seem to affect fertility. Across developed and developing countries higher levels of education are usually accompanied with better knowledge on contraception and a wider range of opportunities to choose from in terms of life goals. The decision to have a child thus turns into one amongst other options

(Rindfuss et al., 1996). Also, women with higher levels of education tend to share more independent and emancipated values (see results from World Values Survey and Chioda, 2016) and to agree less with traditional role models, including the centering of their purpose in life around mothering. Besides education,<sup>76</sup> the financial and economic situation of the mother (or the partner) are important factors at play. Having a child is a considerable investment that people might be more hesitant to make in times of economic hardship. Aspirations for the future and life plans are also fundamental to understanding fertility decision processes. Whether or not reproduction is a key goal, aspirations related to work and education have an impact on how women and girls make decisions about having children. Education and work opportunities may constitute potential competitors towards the goal of being a parent. While generally the costs of parenthood are higher for women than men, they can be mitigated by services that help balance family and career. These include affordable child care and financial support. On a personal level, the quality and stability of the relationship may be important factors. Finally, social interactions, particularly with peers and family, are significant in shaping decisions.

However, beyond the complexities of fertility decision-making specifically, decision-making in general is a complex field of study. A number of theorists have empirically shown that individuals do not necessarily make rational decisions, particularly if exposed to poverty, time pressure, and financial stress. All of those can cause cognitive stress and therefore, poor people may rely even more on automatic decision making than their non-poor counterparts (World Bank, 2015). It is important to note that poverty cannot only pose constraints that may influence the decision outcome, but even more so, poverty may influence the decision-making process itself (Heifetz & Minelli, 2006). Mullainathan and Shafir's (2013) research reveals that poverty can impose a cognitive burden on individuals that makes it especially difficult for them to think deliberatively (instead of automatically). Besides stress and cognitive burden associated with poverty, there are poverty related limitations to imagining a better life. The ability to envision a future, to make reasonable and confident choices about moving toward one's imagined future, and to seize opportunities do not automatically develop (see Appadurai, 2004 on the 'capacity to aspire'). This ability must be acquired under certain (mostly context related) conditions.

In addition to poverty, adolescence itself is a turbulent time cognitively and socio-emotionally, when decision-making may lead to sub-optimal outcomes. As argued above, individuals generally do not take purely rational decisions. When it comes to adolescents, they tend to underestimate the consequences of their actions and have a stronger preference for risk-taking as well as for adjusting to behave in line with their peers (O'Donoghue & Rabin, 2001). These factors can contribute to short-term-focused decision-making and hence, to suboptimal outcomes like dropping out of school early (Adelman et al., 2016). In addition, the physiological changes that occur during adolescence may contribute to increased sexual motivation in teenagers which may

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<sup>76</sup> Across developed and developing countries higher levels of education are usually accompanied with better knowledge on contraception and an increase in opportunities to choose from in terms of life goals. The decision to have a child thus turns into one amongst other options (Rindfuss et al., 1996).



make decisions related to pregnancy even less ‘rational’ (Udry et al., 1986; Udry & Billy, 1987). Furthermore, the transitional character of adolescence, the fact that it is a period of identity formation may make their decision-making less rooted in stable identity concepts. Also, the fact that this is commonly the period in which adolescents try to achieve autonomy from parents is a particular factor that potentially distorts a purely rational way of making a decision. Finally, adolescents may not have the same understanding and perceptions of risks as adults, which may lead to different outcomes of decision-making (compare also: Kiragu & Zabin, 1995; Webb, 1994). Other factors that contribute to the constraints in decision-making capacity as adolescents relate to their direct dependence on others (partners and family members) and relatedly, the lack of means to become independent economically.

Furthermore, there are additional barriers to decision-making for adolescent girls. The way that socially constructed gender norms are enforced in their daily lives contributes significantly to setting the boundaries for their actions. They are not the ones in control when it comes to several types of decisions, as will be seen throughout the following chapters. Along those lines, a representative survey conducted by UNDP in Nicaragua shows that girls tend to have less decision-making capacity in many life dimensions compared to boys (UNDP, 2011). Lack of control in relationships and of decision-making capacity in life more broadly are different when comparing by gender. In line with these hypotheses, Musick (1993) concretely referring to the case of teenage motherhood, emphasizes this difficulty in making rational decisions when poor and an adolescent: “In order to avoid teenage motherhood, girls growing up in poverty need to possess not just average but above-average psychological resources and strengths, self-concepts, and competencies” (p. 13). This is even more true if gender norms place a strong value on family formation and motherhood and do offer very few other roles and options.

## 5.2 What is agency?

One necessary condition for decision-making is agency—or process freedom. Semantically, agency stems from the Latin “to do, drive, or lead” and translates as the capacity to do. Theoretically (as will be discussed soon), access to information and contraception are available for young adults in Nicaragua. Practically though, girls and specifically, the poor are unable to make use of this information and knowledge effectively. The following section of this chapter will discuss ‘agency’ as a fundamental deprivation poor girls in Nicaragua are facing. The absence of agency among poor girls makes it impossible for them to take control over decision-making processes and achieve outcomes they have “reason to value” (Sen, 1999, p. 87).

Agency has been discussed by Bandura (1986, 1997, 2006), and by Emirbayer and Mische (1998). These authors refer to agency as a concept which brings “a sense of responsibility for one’s life course” and a “belief that one is in control of one’s decisions and is responsible for their outcomes” according to Schwartz, Coté, and Arnett (2005, p. 207). From a psychological perspective, Bandura defined agency as follows: “To be an agent is to influence intentionally

one's functioning and life circumstances. (...) There are four core properties of human agency. One such property is intentionality. People form intentions that include action plans and strategies for realizing them. Most human pursuits involve other participating agents, so there is no absolute agency. (...) The second property involves the temporal extension of agency through forethought. This includes more than future-directed plans. Individuals have to set themselves goals and anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their efforts. (...) The third agentic property is self-reactiveness. Agents are not only planners and forethinkers. They are also self-regulators. (...) The fourth agentic property is self-reflectiveness. People are not only agents of action. They are also self-examiners of their own functioning" (Bandura, 2006, p. 164).

Building on sociological and philosophical traditions, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) conceptualize agency as "a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its "iterational" or habitual aspect) but also oriented toward the future (as a "projective" capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a "practical-evaluative" capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)." (p. 963). The authors further emphasize the potential of agency to reproduce and transform structures in an "interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations" (p. 970). In that sense, they respond to Coleman's bathtub (Coleman, 1990) by acknowledging that individual action indeed leads to transformation of structural contexts. According to their work, agency comes with an 'iterational element': people tend to reproduce what they know, thereby giving stability and order to their identities and sustaining the interactions and institutions they are exposed to. Furthermore, agency also has a 'projective element'—what individual actors hope for or desire for their future shapes their actions. The third dimension of agency is the 'practical-evaluative element,' referring to the capacity of actors to make judgements among alternative actions. It is important to note that agency is an individual, and not a collective attribute. While collective action is very important and can be indeed transformative, it is still based on individual agency and on individual decisions.

Agency is never completely determined by social structure nor by individual character traits. Contrary to that, as a response to certain conditions (cultural, social, historical) actors develop certain patterns of interaction. A very prominent research that exemplifies this statement is Glenn Elder's (1974) study of cohort effects during the Great Depression, which showcases how individuals adjust reactions to a certain historical and social context. In his work, Elder demonstrates how family interactions during economic crisis influence subsequent life choices and careers.

Amartya Sen (1985) has fundamentally contributed to bringing the term 'agency' to the attention of the international development community. Sen (1985) defines agency as "what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important" (p. 203). Agency is the ability to pursue goals that one values and has reason to value. An agent is "someone who acts and brings about change" (Sen, 1999, p. 19). Agency is an essential

component of Sen's capabilities approach. Besides agency, the capability approach contains two other central concepts: 'functioning' and 'capability.' First, functionings are defined as "the various things a person may value doing or being" (Sen, 1999, p. 75). Functionings may include being healthy and well-nourished, being safe, being educated, having a good job, and being able to move around freely. While functionings can also include goods and income, they mainly describe what a person is able to do or be with these. Second, capability refers to the freedom to enjoy various functionings. Capability is defined as "the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve. Capability is, thus, a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another ... to choose from possible livings" (Sen, 1992, p. 40).

Agency stands at the core of the human development and capability approach. It stresses the idea that people are not passively enduring social programs or policies directed towards them, but that they are active subjects of their own destiny. The concept has a strong focus on recognizing human beings as subjects of their own development. One of the central goals of human development, according to Sen, is enabling people to become agents in their own lives and in their communities: "the people have to be seen ... as being actively involved – given the opportunity – in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs" (Sen, 1999, p. 53). Following Sen, the objective of development is to enhance people's capabilities, in the present, in the future, and in all areas of their life—economic, social, political and cultural. 'Freedom' is at the core of development in this understanding. Human development and the capability approach combine a focus on outcomes with a focus on processes. In the capability approach, agency is referred to as the ability to realize one's potential.

Agency is exercised with respect to the goals the person values and has reason to value: There is a strong emphasis on choice in the definition of agency. Hence, an assessment of whether or not one is exercising agency includes an evaluation as to whether the agent's goals are in some way reasonable. A person who harms or humiliates others would not, in this view, be exerting agency (Deneulin & Shahani, 2009).<sup>77</sup>

The relevance of the concept of agency with regard to gender inequality has been highlighted through the prominence in the World Development Report 2012 on Gender Equality and Development. Here, agency figures as one of the three primary dimensions of gender equality (World Bank, 2012d). It is understood as the process through which women and men use their endowments and take advantage of opportunities to achieve desired outcomes. In order to do so, one must first take a decision and then act upon that decision (World Bank, 2012d). Agency can be expressed in many ways—in personal relationships, in communities (autonomy in

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<sup>77</sup>"Sen stresses the importance of "reason to value" because we need to scrutinize our motivations for valuing specific lifestyles, and not simply value a certain life without reflecting upon it" (Robeyns, 2003, p. 63).

decision-making, participation in politics, and freedom of movement), and in an individual's ability to accumulate endowments such as land or property, education, or health.

While of value on its own, agency also has instrumental value. It can be understood as the process through which women and men use their endowments and take advantage of economic opportunities to achieve desired outcomes. Agency is vitally important for policy design as a catalyst of other development outcomes: "Instrumentally, agency matters because it has been hypothesized and many times confirmed, that it can serve as a means to other development outcomes. The agency of women for instance, has been shown to affect positively the well-being of all those around them" (Sen, 1999, p. 191).

The concept of agency has sometimes been used interchangeably with empowerment. The following conceptual framework for understanding empowerment was outlined in 'Empowerment and Poverty: A Sourcebook': "The expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives" (Narayan, 2005). While certain similarities with the agency terminology are quite obvious, still, the difference seems to be that the process of "increasing-power" is conceived as the result of the interaction between two building blocks: agency and opportunity structure. Opportunity structure is the "broader institutional, social, and political context of formal and informal rules and norms within which actors pursue their interests" (Samman & Santos, 2009, p.3). This definition hence highlights that a positive attitude and motivation may not be sufficient in a context that constrains individuals and thus prevents them from transforming their choices into the desired outcomes. As Samman and Santos (2009) explain, while Narayan considers agency and the opportunity structure as jointly constituting empowerment, the understanding put forward in the World Development Report 2012 (World Bank, 2012d) follows Sen and understands empowerment as the expansion of agency, which, alongside the expansion of opportunities, constitutes development. Here, the conception of agency seems broader, referring to both direct control and effective power.

### 5.3 Identity development, emerging adulthood, and decision-making on fertility

Agency and aspirations are important factors that influence if and how individuals can shape a plan for their own lives. To better understand how youth shape their life plans, a brief discussion on the theoretical background on identity formation seems valid. "Identity is a social-psychological construct that reflects social influences through imitation and identification processes and active self-construction in the creation of what is important to the self and to others" (Adams & Marshal, 1996, p. 433). Erik Erikson's extensive and foundational writings on identity development have established a tradition of identity theory (Sokol, 2009). His writings have inspired a line of research, beginning with Marcia's (1967) conceptualization of the identity status paradigm. A significant body of research has built on Erikson, validating identity types and

the relationships between the identity states (for instance: Kroger, 1989, 1993; Marcia et al., 1993). While Erikson built the theoretical foundation of research on identity, the empirical research on the topic only emerged later. Erikson pays specific attention to identity crisis, which is typical for adolescence. According to him, identity formation does not conclude in adolescence though, but continues beyond it. New experiences in adulthood will then be incorporated into one's identity, according to Erikson. Identity formation will continue particularly throughout critical moments of crisis in an adult person's life.

Erikson understands adolescence as a transitional developmental period which follows childhood and then leads itself into adulthood. He does not define concrete ages with regards to 'adolescence', but the two questions that emerge from that period: 'Who am I?' and 'What is my place in this world?' Marcia (1967), further building on Erikson's writings, extracted the dimensions of exploration and commitment deriving four identity statuses through that process: First, 'diffusion,' characterized by low exploration and low commitment, and hence, by apathy and disinterest in identity issues. Second, 'foreclosure,' characterized by low exploration and high commitment, and hence, by rigidity and conformity in identity formation. Third, 'moratorium,' characterized by high exploration and low commitment, and hence, by active search for a sense of self. Fourth, 'achievement,' characterized by high exploration and high commitment, and hence, by consolidation of various self-elements into integrated identity (Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett 2005).<sup>78</sup>

A generally very important question—and one that is particularly important for this research project—is the following: To what extent is identity formed as an individual project versus a function of interacting in social and cultural contexts? Erikson recognized the role of context in identity development (Adams & Marshal, 1996). The author claims: "individual and society are intricately woven, dynamically related in continual change" (Erikson, 1959, p. 114). Hence, according to Erikson, identity development is affected by social context. Following that, Adams et al. (1987) claim the social context in which identity is developed can be divided in a micro and a macro context. The micro context consists in personal relations and exposure to other individuals which affects personal identity directly. Contrary to that, the macro context is composed by overarching social and cultural contexts in which social identity is shaped through norms, practices, and beliefs. An interesting contribution by these authors is the idea that the effects of the macro context are implemented through micro contexts: for instance, certain cultural norms are taught to children by their parents. Finally, in a more explicit approach, Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological model of human development accounted for several levels of social and cultural context in which identity may be embedded.

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<sup>78</sup> Côté and Schwartz (2002) operationalize the concept to build a composite measure of agency, consisting of self-esteem, purpose in life, ego strength, and internal locus of control. They find it to be positively related to identity achievement and negatively related to identity diffusion (Côté and Schwartz, 2002).

Identity develops out of both the individual and social functions of identity. According to Erikson and his successors, both social and psychological processes come to influence the sense of self. In social experiences, individuals shape the social process, which in turn shapes individuals. Therefore, context is an essential feature of the self. Adam and Marshal (1996) specifically emphasize the point that the self is constructed in a relational context. Thus, identity is constructed through a 'person-in-context.' Ianni (1989) shows how context influences youth identity development in his empirical research of family, schools, and community and the structural set of expectations and standards that facilitate a successful adolescent transition to young adulthood. Through a comparison of adolescents living in urban, suburban, and rural communities, the author demonstrates a complex contextual influence that shapes adolescents' behaviours, aspirations, and identities. The study reveals that in communities where adults express consistent values and expectations, adolescents develop a positive sense of self; aspirations and goals with a purpose and direction; a commitment and identity that includes a personal and social responsibility to self and others; and perceptions of power and mastery. In contrast, in communities influenced by conflict and poverty, where youth are not provided with consistent directions or expectations (from family or community), they may experience role confusion and have a diffused sense of self. Adams and Marshal (1996) quote another empirical study about adolescents at-risk (Panel on High-Risk Youth, 1993). Here, macro-level influences (poverty, crime rates, and policing practices) determine the availability of micro-level influences such as role models. An increased accumulation of negative macrolevel features increase the likelihood of restricted role models for identification and imitation. Under such circumstances, identity formation will be marked by restricted choice according to the authors.

Beyond communities, societies provide context for identity development in a broader sense. Baumeister's (1986) historical analysis of identity development reveals that different societies provide different levels of choice in the construction of self. Identities may be assigned by lineage or gender and primarily determined by imitation and identification processes. Overall, there are varying degrees to which societies set contexts for identity development by choice, achievement, and self-transformation. In Western societies, identity is most often thought to be heavily selected from many available choices (Beck, 1992).

Relatedly, the empirical studies on the link between agency (here specifically: life planning) and structure by Brim and Forer (1956) are also of specific interest to this research. The main research question there is whether values or social structure are behind an individual's capacity to plan the future. The authors find that social status decreases one's vulnerability to the behavior of others and also, to the effects of natural events. Consequently, youth from higher status groups are better able to plan their lives farther ahead. The authors also find that long range planning is positively correlated with socio-economic status, which itself reflects structural influences. Relatedly, and important for this study, several studies have reported results indicating that lower class members in contrast to those of the middle-class are more present-oriented (Elias, 1949; LeShan, 1952; Schneider & Lysgaard, 1953). This is very consistent with the differences one

observes when comparing life planning and resilience across different socio-economic groups in this study as will be presented in the following chapters.

A substantive body of sociological literature points to the idea that the period during which youth explore, test, and transition to adulthood has become increasingly prolonged. This extended phase is characterized now by transitions between education and work, dating and mating, and childhood and adulthood (Wallace, 1995). Arnett is one of the central theorists in this context. Arnett states that until recently, young people of 21 years of age had grown up very quickly and had made serious enduring choices about their lives at a relatively early age. These choices were related to education; partnering and marriage; family formation, including having a child; and those choices related to jobs and work. However, now experimentation and exploration last much longer, the “road to adulthood” has become much longer as a result (Arnett 2004, p. 3). These changes to the transition to adulthood are situated in a postmodern societal context of increased individualization (Beck, 1992). This increased individualization that Beck (1992) discusses is emerging when market-oriented policies and consumption-based lifestyles are replacing community-oriented policies and production-based lifestyles. Beck (1992) states further that problems and issues that were once addressed with collective solutions are increasingly left for individuals to resolve on their own. As a result of these developments, expectations have risen in late-modern societies regarding what life course has to offer people in terms of their own personal development and what their life-projects shall culminate in and what individuals should achieve. The underlying assumption here is that these individual trajectories are based on people’s own preferences and choices. Hence, the transition to adulthood has become increasingly prolonged, likely as a result of economic and societal changes. Today, individuals are left to decide much more on their own how to structure the course of their lives, particularly when it comes to events that were once more normatively structured, such as when and how to form a family (including marriage and gender roles). They are left to decide on their own and to accept and adjust to the consequences of their choices and actions (Beck, 1992). Erikson himself already introduced the idea that the concept of a ‘prolonged adolescence’ is typical of industrialized societies specifically. Hence, these theories may have significantly greater explanation power among the middle-class in developing countries who tend to have more similar habits with their peers from industrialized, Western societies. What Côté (2000) calls the ‘developmental individualization’ is largely possible due to a decline of traditional social markers and of economic barriers involving gender, ethnicity, and social class. When all of these lose the capacity to determine one’s life paths and possibilities to some extent, the individual is suddenly freer to choose from a multitude of options and to frame her or his path in a way that is much more accommodating to his or her personal preferences.

Exploring preferences and possibilities is what lies behind the concept of ‘emerging adulthood,’ or the prolonged transition to adulthood which may extend into the 20s. ‘Emerging adulthood’ has become a growing area of research initiated by J. Arnett (1998). According to the author, the transition to adulthood has become increasingly prolonged in every postindustrial society during

the past half century. People stay in school longer, marry later, and have children later. In the postindustrial period, the transition to adulthood can last from the late teens until at least the mid-20s. Hence, Arnett proposes that these years constitute a new and distinct developmental period: emerging adulthood constitutes a phase between adolescence and adulthood, but one that is profoundly different from those. Since his first publication, the term has become increasingly widespread (Schwartz & Arnett, 2005). The foundation of his theory stemmed from Arnett's dissatisfaction with the power of common sociological theory to explain the phenomena he observed with regards to these years in young peoples' lives. Calling it the 'transition to adulthood' seemed to diminish it, as if it were merely a brief passage connecting the two more important periods of adolescence and young adulthood, according to Arnett (2004).

Emerging adulthood, so Arnett, should be regarded as a distinct period of life in its own right. Arnett identifies five main features: Emerging adulthood is the age of identity explorations and of instability, it is the most self-focused age of life, the age of 'feeling in-between,' and the age of possibilities. All of those criteria, as will be seen later on, apply very well to the stories told by the middle-class informants; however, they do not apply to almost any of those shared by the poor participants in this study. The reason why Arnett argues that this period is not simply an 'extended adolescence' relate to the fact that contrary to adolescence, emerging adulthood is freer from parental control. Identity explorations happen more independently. Similarly, this phase cannot be described as early adulthood because the transitions historically associated with adult status have not been made by most of the emerging adults (particularly those transitions related to family formation: marriage and parenthood). As this point indicates, the poor in the study do not experience emerging adulthood in Arnett's sense. They transition faster to adulthood than the middle-class, and the main topic of study here, early pregnancy and related family formations, are a marker of this early adulthood compared to the middle-class. Importantly, this seems true for the poor without pregnancy experience as well. However, other criteria of adulthood as put forward by Arnett are not necessarily met by the poor women, including accepting responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and achieving financial independence (Arnett, 2004, p. 15).

In Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood, identity issues have a prominent role (Schwartz & Arnett, 2005). The potential origins of this new period in life are the multitude of life alternatives available to emerging adults. Possibilities related to career paths, worldviews, and romantic attachments have expanded. On the other hand, collective support for identity formation has decreased (Coté & Levine, 2002). The combination of the lack of a clearly determined structure, the vast possibilities of identity choices, and the lack of guidance together make identity development a personal project and require the exercise of agency in negotiating this passage.

Particularly important though in the context of this study: given the specific socio-economic context that favored the appearance of this particular life phase of emerging adulthood, it is likely a phenomenon limited to a specific socio-economic status in western, industrialized societies. Halperin (2001) points to the concern that the experiences of non-college emerging adults may



not necessarily be similar to what Arnett describes. Young adults who do not have access to college (in the United States) likely have less space for identity exploration (Halperin, 2001). Consequently, the period of emerging adulthood is not universal in human development. This period exists under certain conditions that have occurred recently and only among certain groups and in certain cultures. I will discuss later how this theory may apply to the data collected in Nicaragua and which limitations can be observed. Halperin (2001) suggests that emerging adulthood exists today mainly in the industrialized or postindustrial countries of the West, along with Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea. The author also states that the phenomenon is rather characteristic of cultures than of specific countries. Moreover, social class may be more important to predict whether or not young adults have the opportunities for the explorations of emerging adulthood or not. Specifically, with regard to developing countries, profound differences between urban and rural areas may be perceived (Halperin, 2001, p. 23). One important criteria for emerging adulthood—a certain independence from parents achieved through leaving the parental home at 18 or 19—has been a common phenomenon in the United States since the 1970s. Before, the main reason for leaving home was marriage and forming one's own household (Arnett, 2004). However, this behavior is not universal in the United States: Latinos and Asian Americans for instance do not tend to follow this pattern as much, and one of the main reasons behind this difference seems to be related to “the high value placed on virginity before marriage” among this population, so Arnett (2004, p. 54). This shows already that emerging adulthood may have particular characteristics among women if compared to men. In the United States, the options available to women have changed substantially. The pressure to form a union and a family in one's early twenties has significantly diminished if not disappeared in most societal segments (Arnett, 2004, p. 7). This is certainly related to the diminishing of the taboo of premarital sex with the socio-cultural changes in the 1970s and the ‘sexual revolution.’ As Arnett explains (2004): It was the emergence of the concept of dating in the 1920, which meant going out to take part in a shared activity – instead of seeing the potential partner within the parental home. The removal of the location of courtship into the public arena suddenly opened the possibility for sexual experimentation.

The relationship between the theory of emerging adulthood and agency is quite evident. Emerging adults are increasingly required to individualize their life courses in general and their identities, in particular (Schwartz & Arnett, 2005). This thought was already present in Erikson's (1968) writings. He suggests that the formation of a coherent sense of identity in postindustrial societies would likely benefit from a sense of agency, self-direction, and free exercise of choice (Schwartz, Coté, & Arnett, 2005). The pursuit of different opportunities with the objective of ‘self-improvement’ in different dimensions of life (educational, cultural, intellectual, occupational, etc.) implies the exercise of agency. Those young people who are addressing this developmental stage more proactively and exercising their agency freely are more likely to “form coherent sense of identity” (Schwartz & Arnett, 2005). Other youths who show more passive and inactive attitudes and behaviors will likely not be able to fully take advantage of the opportunities presented in today's Western societies with their numbers of possibilities to test and draw from.

Young adults can also simply choose paths of least effort, by choosing some default options following the ‘usual’ path without experiencing the full possibilities of exploration. This is what Côté calls the ‘default individualization’, involving a ‘life course dictated by circumstance.’ Such exploration and decision making regarding one’s life can come with very positive connotations or can be felt as very burdensome, depending on one’s resources (Wallace & Kovatcheva, 1996, 1998). Socio-economic disadvantage, the access to fewer resources (and by resources, I refer to support beyond the mere financial support), likely leads to identity development which is less based on extensive exploration, testing and choosing from different options available.

Other research also confirms that there may be some significant variation in the pace at which young people feel they reach adulthood. Experiencing family stress may be a very important factor in determining that pace. Weiss (1979) argues that divorce makes children grow up faster. Kirkpatrick and Mollborn (2009) show evidence on the fact that people experiencing hardship are subjectively aging faster: Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, the author finds that experiencing hardship during childhood and during the adolescent years is associated with feeling relatively older. People who experienced hardship in their early years also identify as adults earlier compared to those who did not experience similar levels of hardship. Other researchers have similarly indicated that young people from married biological-parent families are less likely to consider themselves adults than young people with other family structures (Benson & Kirkpatrick, 2009). This is consistent with Elder’s (1974) analysis of the lives of adolescents in families that experienced economic stress during the Great Depression. Finally, ethnographic studies of inner-city youth show that children transition relatively quicker into adulthood in these contexts (Burton, 2007; Burton, Allison, & Obeidallah, 1995). Family disruption and poverty, along with other conditions of deprivation or stress like feeling unsafe in daily life, represent key hardships implicated in subjective aging during the early life course. These theoretical conceptions resonate very strongly with the differences I find when comparing the processes of transitioning into adulthood between the poor and middle-class women: the latter usually experience a clear phase of emerging adulthood as described in Arnett’s theory, which is not the case for the much faster transitioning poor women.

#### 5.4 Structure matters: Context, adaptive preferences, and the ‘capacity to aspire’

The idea that poverty negatively affects agency and identity development is not new. Poverty means more than merely low income and low consumption; poverty also means low achievement in education, health, nutrition, and other areas of human development. In the development arena, the World Development Report 2000/2001 *Attacking Poverty* (World Bank, 2001) directly made such associations. The report included ‘voicelessness’ as a social dimension of poverty. According to the same report, poverty means a lack of freedom of choice and action and a lack of power to control one’s life. A very straightforward explanation which brings the concept of agency to the center of the poverty discussion comes from the ‘Voices of the Poor’ (Narayan, 2000). A woman

from the community of Borborema Brazil argues “the rich one is someone who says, ‘I am going to do it’ and does it” (Narayan, 2000, p. 28). The same report shows that while poor people are active agents in their lives, they are often powerless to influence the social and economic factors that determine their well-being. Along the same lines, Klugman et al. (2014) state that: “Poverty increases the likelihood of agency deprivations” (p. xix).

This idea of poverty negatively impacting agency dates back to one of the most prominent debates in the sociological literature: the ‘structure-agency debate.’ The question to what extent people are free agents determining their destinies as opposed to being determined by structural forces associated with social class, gender, and the like, lies at the center of the debate. The range of positions in the field includes those theorists who interpret social structure (or: external conditions that limit choices and opportunities of the individual) as determinant to one’s possibilities and outcomes, making it thus often impossible to exercise ‘agency.’ Others emphasize the individual and his/her potential and see social structure as the result and consequence of individual actions. This work follows Bourdieu’s view, according to which individual action is simultaneously shaped and shaping social context.

As Emirbayr and Mische (1998) emphasize, there have been a few recent attempts to reconcile the two positions, aiming to understand both sides of the equation as “reciprocally constituting moments of a unified social process” (p. 1003). According to Bourdieu (1977), individuals do exercise agency, but in a given social context—in the context of certain power relations with certain predominant values. Hence, an individual action is taken in the context of specific structural macro settings, and that specific action (if taken by several individuals) results in changes or reproduction of the structure itself. This understanding is in line with Bandura (2006) who argues that “Social cognitive theory rejects a duality between human agency and social structure. People create social systems, and these systems, in turn, organize and influence people’s lives” (p. 164). Not only has Bourdieu contributed to that view, but also Giddens’s (1979, 1984) theory of structuration, which characterizes structure and agency as mutually constitutive (and hence, inseparable) elements aims towards the same idea of mutually reinforcing dimensions. This enabled empirical research that underscores both the causal significance of structure as the constraining and enabling conditions of action, and of praxis as “an active constituting process, accomplished by, and consisting in, the doings of active subjects” (Giddens, 1976, p. 121). The criticism of these attempts for reconciliation states that each component (structure and agency) may not be examined separately anymore (Archer, 1988, p. 77). Emirbayr and Mische (1998) reject this critique by stating that despite the interrelatedness of agency and structure, they still remain independent elements and hence, separate objects for analysis.

In the following chapters, I will be looking at two aspects: The decision-making regarding one’s life project (identity development) among Nicaraguan youth and the decision-making in specific dimensions of life (control over sexuality, one’s body, household, and broader life decisions, etc.). These subsequent chapters will show that for poor young women, there are essentially two barriers that impact their capacity to exercise agency related to concrete decision-making in

different dimensions of life and related to their overall life project: their socio-economic condition (poverty) and gender and the roles and attributes associated socially with it. Both are important limiting factors and the way they translate into these women's decision-making processes will be analyzed further in the upcoming chapters. The following discussion will show how social structure can play a role in either facilitating or blocking attempts to behave in an agentic manner (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). At the same time, the analysis will also recognize that individuals can cope with and overcome obstacles despite social structure constraints and demonstrate resilience.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, the following chapters will show how accumulated individual action will shape and construct context (see specifically in the Conclusions chapter).

As discussed previously, following Coleman's 'Foundation of Social Theory' (1990), the macro conditions individuals are exposed to guide (or structure) those actors in the way they make their decisions. The accumulation of multiple individual decisions at the micro level then will reshape macro conditions. However, while structure matters to explain individual decisions (which then will accumulate back to shaping structural conditions), it would be too simplified to understand individual decisions (particularly those related to family formation and fertility) as straightforward rational decisions in light of certain structural conditions. Hence, Emirbayer, and Mische (1998) acknowledge Coleman's attempt to "bring men back in" and "to return to an action theory firmly grounded in the purposive, instrumental, and calculating orientations of individuals" (p. 966). At the same time the authors criticize the bathtub model since it "fails to address the problem at the heart of rational choice explanations: the (clearly acknowledged) decision to bracket the question of how temporally embedded actors actually reach decisions that can retrospectively be interpreted as rational" (p. 966). The assumption that "actions are 'caused' by their (anticipated) consequences" (Coleman, 1986, p. 1312) still attributes calculated rationality to the causation of individual actions according to these authors.

Translating this theory to the context of this research, one notices that poverty and gender norms seem to provide the guiding framing principles for the poor to make decisions regarding their future including when and how to form a family. Contrary to that, young women from middle-class families envision a broader range of opportunities for themselves and in addition, they are less restricted by traditional gender norms compared to the poor. Therefore, the context in which

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<sup>79</sup> Coté (1997) empirically tested the link between agency and structure (measured by family socioeconomic background). The summary of the author, critical of more structuralist positions among sociologists, reads as follows: "Unless sociologists recognize that some young people can cope with and even overcome certain obstacles, they risk maintaining a patronizing view of the very people whom they seem dedicated to 'liberating'" (p.132). While clearly, personal resilience shall not be denied here, and I agree that personal agency can potentially override any previous socioeconomic disadvantages in terms of important aspects of identity formation, it should be noted that there are certain limitations regarding the empirical test put forward in this article. The very strong selection biases emerging from a purely University background sample does not fulfill the potential to speak for the most disadvantaged and their independence from structure.

they shape their decisions is different from the one of the poor, and so are their decisions as well as the actions they take to implement those decisions.

Aspirations matter for identity development. What an individual aims to pursue for his or her life is not trivial—aspirations are certainly the driving force behind actions and behaviors. Aspirations for the future, personal objectives, and life plans are also fundamental to understanding fertility decision processes. Whether or not having a baby is the focus of life, a key goal, or one amongst other things to achieve in life, such preferences influence how women and girls make decisions about having children or not. These aspirations are not independent from what are perceived opportunities in terms of education, work, or place in society more broadly. These opportunities will constitute potential competitors towards the goal of being a parent. Having few aspirations besides motherhood may mean there is nothing to impede having a baby at a certain point in life. In that sense, attitudes and expectations about the future can influence the probability of teenage pregnancy.

While not all young women who become pregnant before age 20 think that motherhood is the main objective in life, it is obvious that if they have no other life objectives they hold on to strongly, they have no immediate reason to actively avoid pregnancy. The literature confirms these hypotheses: attitudes and expectations about the future are likely influencing the probability of teenage pregnancy. Put differently: When young women face a lack of opportunities, they may not have incentives to avoid early pregnancy (Plotnick, 1992, 1993, 2007; Azevedo et al., 2012; Cater and Coleman, 2006; Perez Then et al., 2011). Näslund-Hadley and Binstock (2010) similarly show in a qualitative study in Peru and Paraguay that adolescents who face barriers to educational achievement and to building education related aspirations are more likely to experience teenage pregnancy. Young women in these situations may also consciously plan to have a baby according to these authors. In addition, the results of the paper question the commonly assumed sequencing of school dropouts among girls being a consequence of pregnancy.

The following chapters will portray how agency and aspirations are extremely important in the context of this research. They are instrumental to taking advantage of what a society offers to young people, and they are particularly essential for an individual's capacity to decide if and when to have a child, to implement that decision, and to take the necessary steps to make the choice a reality. Appadurai (2004) argues that aspirations are shaped in context, and in social interactions, he refers to the 'capacity to aspire' as being shaped by observation and hence by context. Living in conditions of poverty or social and economic exclusion affects individuals' attitudes about themselves and their aspirations. They tend to have lower aspirations and lower self-confidence, reducing their likelihood and ability to deliberately plan for the future (Appadurai, 2004). That implies strict limitations for the poor in particular. The poor and the socially disadvantaged have fewer opportunities than others to learn about opportunities, their own potential, and their possible objectives. As part of one's socialization, one learns what people like us typically do, believe, behave like, and plan and aspire to. Therefore, the environment in which an individual is embedded significantly influences his or her interests, preferences, and conceptions of a better

life. That lends itself towards a possible explanation as to why poorer people may set lower objectives and aspire less. Similarly, Appadurai (2004) argues that development ‘needs’ are always grounded in culture (Appadurai, 2004, p. 67–68). Ideas about family formation, work, education, etc. may be prevalent in certain local contexts and while not necessarily explicitly expressed, they may lay out the ways in which people in this context ‘should’ behave, ‘should’ think, etc. and hence, constitute ‘intermediate norms’ according to Appadurai (2004). The culture one relates to thus may prescribe the meanings and values associated to certain things and not to others, and those will then shape the framing of the individual’s beliefs and hopes.

Conversely, there is also empirical evidence on the capacity to aspire and how the lack thereof hinders upward mobility. Ray (2006) suggest that the lack of capacity to aspire may prevent poor youth from investing into human capital. Macours and Vakis (2014) provide empirical evidence of the positive effect of increased aspirations on investment behavior. In their randomized experiment in Nicaragua, women whose aspirations increased through communication with successful and motivated leaders were more likely to make higher human capital investments. This is consistent with sociological literature, which has shown that social interactions strongly influence not only educational and work-related aspirations, but also the outcomes in these domains of life. These are commonly referred to as “neighborhood effects” in urban sociology (Jencks & Mayer, 1990). Moreover, the Coleman report (1966) showed peer effects on individual educational achievement by stating that children’s outcomes in primary school are largely influenced by the socioeconomic characteristics of the other children in school. Flechtner (2014) referred to the phenomenon of low aspirations and how those can lead to underachievement and thus perpetuate poverty as “aspiration traps” (Flechtner, 2014). Inequality seems to increase this effect even more. Debraj Ray (2006) shows that high inequality means fewer opportunities for interactions between the rich and the poor. This social distance makes the outcomes of the rich unattainable for the poor and hence, isolates them from ‘aspiring’ to a better life. This is incredibly important since as mentioned before, aspirations are considered the precondition for action. Hence, if people are not given the possibility to take the first step, social mobility will not occur, which is even more concerning in an already unequal society.

Women, in particular, have oftentimes grown up to believe that certain things are not possible for them and that certain things are outside their capacities. Social norms play a fundamental role in this context. Social norms are “powerful prescriptions of acceptable behavior and they are reflected both in formal structures of society and in its informal rules, beliefs, and attitudes,” according to Muñoz Boudet et al. (2012). Individual preferences and aspirations are not only influenced by context, networks, but also social norms. Together, these factors influence what individuals perceive as desirable and what they perceive as possible for them. Individual preferences do not develop in a vacuum—they are constrained or enabled by broader mental and social structures and norms. These mental models and social norms can fundamentally restrict individuals’ abilities to choose and decide freely. Conversely, they favor the adoption of ‘common’ and existing behaviors.

Social norms are usually reflected in formal and informal institutions of society. They permeate beliefs and behaviors and get reinforced through the expectations of what others will do (Bicchieri, 2006). An individual's action depends both on what he or she believes other people are doing, but also what he or she thinks others expect of her/him. That means that behaviors do not exclusively depend on individual preferences, but also on expectations about what others are doing. Hence, individual choices affect and are affecting those of others. According to Bicchieri (2006), these individual choices are constructed out of beliefs (normative and empirical beliefs), expectations (normative and empirical), and material constraints. Relatedly, gender roles define the ideal expected behaviors for men and women in the private and in the public sphere, sanctioning what is deemed (in)appropriate for women and men.

Gender norms define what is appropriate and desirable for men and women and what is not so. Gender roles are learned through observation and are socially enforced. Girls and boys learn these rules at very early ages through interactions with family, peers, community members, and the media. Behaviors that diverge from the prescribed social norms are socially sanctioned which is how the norms are imposed on the individuals. The WDR 2012 refers to social norms as part of informal institutions and thus, emphasizes the role they lay in shaping and enforcing the choices and decisions of women and men in a given society as well as more broadly, gender equality outcomes.

Expectations about women's and men's roles within the home and in society more broadly have an impact on how individuals see themselves and how they construct their life goals. On a related note, the conceptions around motherhood might have a very strong impact on questions of if and when women decide to have children. Furthermore, it may have consequences on how women fill their role as mothers. For instance, if motherhood is essentially the main role girls see themselves in their adult lives, if it is socially read as the main marker of adulthood for women, then young women will likely opt to become mothers earlier in life. On the other hand, if there are competing roles available to women in a given society, if they are expected to have a professional career and to fulfill certain objectives and milestones before becoming a mother, then it is more likely that women will first opt to achieve those competing roles and objectives before actively choosing motherhood.

Overall, social norms play an important role in the relation between women's agency and the opportunities available to them, they can facilitate or hinder individuals from taking advantage of available opportunities. Specifically, research has shown the strong link between social norms and female labor force participation (Fortin, 2005; Goldin, 2006; Fernández & Fogli, 2006). This research suggests that more traditional views negatively correlate with female labor force participation. For instance, Fortin (2005) analyzing data from the World Values Survey dataset for a number of OECD countries shows that attitude most strongly and negatively associated with female employment rates across countries is measured by agreement with the statement "When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women." Past agreement rates are found to be strong predictors of future employment rates. Furthermore, perceptions of

women as homemakers, measured as agreement with the statement “being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay” is also found to be strongly associated with female labor market outcomes.

In this study’s sample, both poverty and gender significantly shape the way preferences and aspirations are built among the different groups of interviewees. While attributing causality to the role of social norms in development outcomes of young poor women in Nicaragua is beyond the scope of this analysis, I suggest that these can be very powerful drivers of decisions taken by individuals. By prescribing gender roles such as the division of power, labor, activities, and spaces to occupy in a society, social norms may limit the opportunities that are available to women in a given society (Klugman et al., 2014). On the other hand, both men’s and women’s choices are framed within their specific contexts. Women’s and men’s aspirations are shaped by gendered social norms. Restrictive social norms are the opposite of freedom as they pose constraints to an individual (Robeyns, 2003). Social norms define and constrain the space for women (and for men) to exercise their agency by imposing penalties both on those who deviate and on those who do not enforce the norms. Hence, preferences are shaped in a context where social norms set the frames of what is possible. As Robeyns (2003) states: “We do not know what men and women would choose if they were liberated from their gender roles and thus, genuinely free to choose. But we do know that at the moment our choices are constrained unequally because the constraints on choices are structured along gender lines” (Robeyns, 2003, p. 86; see also Robeyns, 2001).

An internalized conviction of lower capacity and preparedness may then trigger choices that will in themselves not contribute to empowering women but to perpetuating their situation of disempowerment (Alsop et al., 2006). This leads to another important reference in this regard: the concept of ‘adaptive preferences,’ which has particularly important relevance in the case of women. Women and men shape their own preferences based on the choices they perceive as available to them. They may adapt to what they deem possible to them. The absence of choice and equality of opportunity thus may affect the individual’s capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004). If women’s preferences adapt in this way to their context, they may be caught in an “inequality trap (...) because of a context that affects their ability to see the pathway to achieve their desired goals” (Muñoz Boudet et al., 2012, p. 24). Agency is important in this context since it is a necessary requirement when trying to challenge social norms: “Increased agency allows women to move from enduring complete compliance to constraining and unequal gender norms, to questioning those norms in face of potential opportunities, to changing their aspirations, as well as their ability to seek and achieve desired outcomes” (Muñoz Boudet et al., 2012, p. 14).

The concept of ‘adaptive preferences’ introduces the idea that individuals adapt their preferences to the opportunities structure available to them. The concept of adaptive preferences was originally introduced by Elster (1982) in his discussion of La Fontaine’s fable of the fox who, when realizing he could not reach the grapes, turns away and convinces himself they were sour. The concept has subsequently been discussed and further developed by several theorists



including by Amartya Sen (1984, 1999) and by Martha Nussbaum (2001). Adaptive preferences represent what people have been “made to prefer” (Teschl & Comim, 2005, p. 236). The capability approach as developed by Sen and Nussbaum, has in part been a response to the problem of adaptive preferences: “Their argument says that people might adapt to certain unfavorable circumstances and any self-evaluation in terms of satisfaction or happiness will in this case necessarily be distorted” (Teschl & Comim, 2005, p. 229). Khader (2009) summarizes examples of adaptive preferences that Nussbaum and Sen both have used to describe the concept: “living without a clean water supply and not being upset about it (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 113), thinking that one is not ill when objective indicators suggest otherwise (Sen, 1999a, p. 53), not complaining about the discriminatory wage structure one is subject to (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 113), staying in an abusive marriage because one believes it is one’s destiny (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 112), not rebelling against tyrannical governments—regardless of whether one can change them (Sen 2002, p. 634)—and achieving happiness in one’s “limited life” despite caste or race oppression (Sen 2002, p. 634)” (Khader 2009, p. 170). Teschl and Comim (2005) distinguish the nuances in the way Elster, Sen, and Nussbaum discuss the topic. On the one hand, they all criticize utilitarianism, stating that it is impossible to explain what people really prefer and what they are made to prefer.

Sen and Nussbaum both stress the idea that it is not only important what individuals value, but also what they “have reason to value” in Sen’s words (Sen, 1999, p. 87). Sen argues that the capability approach helps put emphasis to the belief that preferences shaped in a context of deprivation (and/or oppression) should not be treated as “authoritative judgments about well-being” (Khader, 2009, p. 169). Relatedly, Teschl and Comim (2005) point out that Sen continuously broadened his concept of basic capabilities towards a more substantive understanding of freedom: “Greater freedom enhances the ability of people to help themselves and to influence the world, and these matters are central to the process of development” (Sen, 1999, p. 18). The following quotation shows clearly Sen’s concern with the adaptation of preferences under oppression: “The underdog learns to bear the burden so well that he or she overlooks the burden itself. Discontent is replaced by acceptance, hopeless rebellion by conformist quiet, and – most relevantly in the present context – suffering and anger by cheerful endurance. As people learn to survive to adjust to the existing horrors by sheer necessity of uneventful survival, the horrors look less terrible in the metric of utilities” (Sen, 1984, p. 309).

In other contexts, Sen has discussed specifically the situation of disempowered women and the idea that their concept of personal welfare may not exist in the same ways as it does other populations (Sen, 1990, p. 126). Along similar lines, Nussbaum puts strong emphasis on the problem of adaptive preferences. She discusses and rejects utilitarianism because it fails to capture the complex nature of human actions (Nussbaum, 2001). In her discussion, she reminds the reader of the early foundations of adaptive preferences: “... the phenomenon of adaptive preferences was discussed in a particularly illuminating way by John Stuart Mill in *The Subjection of Women*. Mill argues that men maintain their power over women by shaping women’s

preferences and desires, or, as he puts it, 'enslav[ing] their minds'. They teach women that timidity and 'resignation of all individual will' are 'an essential part of sexual attractiveness'. Women internalize this teaching, just as men become accustomed to being 'the masters of women' (Mills, 1869, pp. 15/16)" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 80).

Nussbaum (2001) criticizes the way the concept is employed by Elster (1983): several of the situations that may be considered adaptation of preferences under Elster's interpretation would not fall under hers, she argues. There may be moments and occasions in which the adjustment of aspirations to realistic outcomes may be positive: "We get used to having the bodies we do have, and even if, as children, we wanted to fly like birds, we simply drop that after a while, and are probably the better for it" (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 137). Furthermore, she argues that Elster considers adaptive preferences to be those when one consciously realizes he/she cannot have what he/she desires to a realistic outcome (see sour grapes fable). More concerningly, changes in one's aspirations and desires based on learning and experience can be irreversible. Nussbaum argues that Sen's approach (and implicitly she agrees with him) is different from Elster's because Sen considers 'life-long habituation' and not a momentary desire that one gives up immediately when realizing it is unrealistic.

Nussbaum's solution to the issue of adaptive preferences is the proposition of a list of ten central human capabilities, which represent universal values. The list aims at "providing the philosophical underpinning for basic political principles" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 68). She acknowledges that a closed list of universal values may not only go against other people's preferences about women, for example, but it also goes against what women themselves may have as preferences at times. However, her conviction is that she does not risk paternalism because her goal is capability and freedom, not concrete functionings. In her own words: "It should be apparent that the approach is not paternalistic in any typical sense, since it gives such a large place to liberty, and envisages the social goal in terms of capability, not functioning" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 84).

Khader (2009) discusses the position that adaptive preferences are such preferences that are "procedurally non-autonomous" (Khader, 2009). However, throughout cautious testing of this hypothesis she arrives at the conclusion that this is not precise and it seems to be based on the conception of choice with a conception of the good built into it. Thinking of adaptive preferences as a lack of procedural autonomy leads to inaccurate conclusions, according to her argumentation. Furthermore, it would lead to "inappropriate attitudes toward persons with adaptive preferences" (Khader, 2009, p. 185). Rather, all the attempts to understand more deeply adaptive preferences and the conditions under which they occur leads to the conclusion that the concept is based on a "conception of the good" (Khader, 2009, p. 185). As she states: "...when we speak about what persons would choose, we implicitly refer to a conception of the good. We think that choices inconsistent with flourishing cannot have been or are likely not to have been chosen" (p. 185). The hypothesis to think of adaptive preferences as procedurally non-autonomous was promising since it would have enabled a combined emphasis on taking the needs and interests of people with adapted preferences into consideration, while, at the same

time, respecting different values and conceptions of the good, as Khader explains. When coming to the understanding that actually adaptive preferences cannot be interpreted as a lack of procedural autonomy, one loses the ability to bring these two simultaneous objectives together. Ways in how these two objectives can be reconciled is one of the key directions for future research in the capability approach according to Khader (2009).

## 5.5 Discussion

This chapter presented an overview of the theoretical foundations of this work: It first opens by discussing decision-making as a complex field of study, and exemplifies how individuals do not necessarily make rational decisions, particularly if exposed to poverty, time pressure, and financial stress. Adolescence puts an additional layer of constraints on rational decision-making. Finally gender and the power dynamics related to it also take an influence on the ways individual (are able to) make decisions.

The chapter also presented the concept of agency and how it has evolved in several disciplines, a concept that will prove to be of great relevance for the findings from the qualitative material presented later on. Furthermore, it put an emphasis on the importance of context in shaping individuals' aspirations and agency. The argument that structure matters for agency, that aspirations and preferences are "adaptive," as discussed earlier, is important in the context of the findings that will be presented in the subsequent chapters. Young women from different socio-economic groups express different aspirations, and their life stories illustrate how and why those differences may arise and what the factors are that may have influenced them to go in different directions. Finally, this chapter also dedicated discussion on the topic of identity development and the concept of emerging adulthood. Similarly to the concept of agency, context matters for the different ways in which adolescents may be able to develop identities, how they may or may not be able to explore different options and test different things. The idea of emerging adulthood as a dedicated life phase closes the chapter, again with a reference to the argument that emerging adulthood may not be something equally experienced by all socio-economic groups. This dialogues with the upcoming presentation of findings, which will show the much shorter transitions of poor adolescents to adulthood.

## 6 Immediate barriers or facilitators of sexual and reproductive decision-making: information, knowledge, and access to contraception

When thinking of how to prevent an unwanted pregnancy, the first initiatives that come to mind are those related to information, knowledge, as well as access to contraception. These provide the two main entry-points in the policy agenda related to the topic. Both of those dimensions can function as obvious barriers to effective pregnancy prevention. Consequently, research, policies, and programs related to teenage pregnancy most often seem to emerge from the health sector.

Access to quality information is obviously a key condition for effective contraceptive use. Secondary schools are one of the main entry-points for the provision of such information. Azevedo et al. (2012) review rigorously evaluated interventions to reduce teenage pregnancy, including school-based interventions. School-wide activities may include communication campaigns involving print or digital information, as well as interpersonal communications led by peer educators or school-based clubs (Lopez et al., 2016). These interventions aim to address multiple factors that influence adolescents' decision making relative to pregnancy and fertility, which can include sexual education and access to information, social norms and gender roles, peer pressure, socio-emotional skills, and aspirations towards the future. School-based programs preventing pregnancy and programs to encourage pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers to remain in school are effective in reducing dropout (Steinka-Fry, Wilson, & Tanner-Smith, 2013). At the same time, when it comes to the effectiveness of sex education programs in reducing pregnancies, research has shown that they may improve knowledge, but by themselves, they may have little effect on changing behavior (Kirby, 1985; Oakley et al., 1995; Wight et al., 2002). At the same time, it is impossible to assess the overall effectiveness of these programs given their significant heterogeneity regarding content, implementation modes, length, methods, didactics, etc. (Lopez et al., 2016). UNFPA (2015) defines 'comprehensive sexuality education' as a "right-based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education, whether in school or out of school" (p. 11). The concept of 'comprehensive' sexuality education is further expressed in a holistic understanding of sexuality.<sup>80</sup> It would not be realistic to assume that all of the principles highlighted under this definition are effectively being implemented consistently everywhere. Programs vary in quality and depth (they could be a single session on contraception or a full-fledged curriculum) and so will the effects from participating in such programs. Besides school-

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<sup>80</sup> According to the same report, comprehensive sexuality education is characterized by nine components: 1) a basis in the core universal values of human rights; 2) an integrated focus on gender, 3) thorough and scientifically accurate information, 4) a safe and healthy learning environment, 5) participatory teaching methods for personalization of information and strengthened skills in communication, decision-making and critical thinking, 6) strengthening youth advocacy and civic engagement, 7) linking to sexual and reproductive health services and other initiatives that address gender equality, empowerment, social and economic assets for young people, 8) cultural relevance in tackling human rights violations and gender inequality, 9) reaching across formal and informal sectors and across age groupings.

based interventions, another entry-point for sexual education is through clinical services (Lopez et al., 2016). Targeted clinic-based programs can also increase access to and information about contraceptive methods (Blank, 2010; Chandra-Mouli, 2014).

This chapter will discuss immediate barriers to decision-making as encountered by the young mothers in the sample. Besides the analysis of the importance of those fundamental ingredients for effective decision-making, the chapter will discuss how they can become easily undermined and how consequently theoretical availability does not equal effective access and usage. First, it will shed light on the importance of sexual information and knowledge and on the different channels and resources poor women and middle-class women have at hand to access them. Second, contraception and the factors that may drive or hinder effective use will be discussed.

## 6.1 Accessing information and knowledge about sexual and reproductive issues: constraints and facilitators

In terms of knowledge, most poor interviewees (both women and men) claimed to have obtained some form of sexual education during adolescence. Only very few cases of young women mentioned they did not know anything about contraception when they first engaged in sexual relations. They then relied on partners who they assumed had some information.

School remains an important entry-point for information. While the limitations of school-based sex education becomes evident in most interviews, some mention schools as the only source of information available to them, which elevates the role and importance of schools even further. At the same time, NGOs seem to be more effective in providing poor youth with useful information and knowledge, according to the interviews. While in NGO settings the environment seems to be better prepared for open discussions and exchange between the different participants if compared to schools, young women still do not always feel comfortable asking questions. Hence, not all of their questions are resolved after exposure to NGO workshops (charlas). Most young women interviewed do not feel comfortable inquiring in-depth about related issues.

*Interviewer: Have you looked for more information to have a responsible sexuality?*

*Z: I was like ... I was a very shy girl and I was sort of ashamed, because whenever I approached someone and I wanted to ask a question people would look at me with other eyes, that made me somewhat afraid.*

*(woman, P/P)*

The internet was also cited as an important source of information for many. At the same time, not all seemed to have access to it and even for those who had, the difficulty of assessing the quality of the information found on the web was mentioned multiple times by participants.

Overall, the quality of the information received was rather low among the poor women in the study. The latter point is reflected in several misconceptions that emerged during interviews. When comparing differences in the quality of sexual education coming from different sources,

many participants stated that ‘charlas’ (workshops) organized by NGOs were of much more value to them than the limited information provided in schools. The ‘charlas’ seemed to reach them on a more personal level and enable true learning. None of those that mentioned sex education in school were able to give more detailed content, reflections, or explanations. Deeper exchanges between teachers and young people were not mentioned. The topic seemingly was referred to very tangentially.

Many participants were not familiar with how to determine the fertile period of a woman or shared concerns that using the pill would lead to infertility. Such concerns over the side effects of modern contraceptives have been widely found to be a key barrier preventing young women from using them (Castle, 2003; Nguyen, Liamputtong, & Murphy 2006; Otoide, Oronsaye, & Okonofua, 2001; Kiluva & Tembele, 1991; Rasch et al., 2000; Richter & Mlambo, 2005; Wood & Jewkes, 2006). Some participants in the sample had limited knowledge about how contraceptives worked and the difference between preventing a pregnancy or a STD. One young woman reported to use the morning-after pill on a regular basis, which could have severe negative health implications. Others stated the risks associated to using contraceptives were too high, which are statements that emerge from misconceptions most often. Some shared the belief that contraception prevent only STDs (and not pregnancies), and they seemingly were not too afraid of those. One informant, when probed about the reasons why she did not use contraception, stated she ‘trusted her partner’—evidently referring to the risk of STDs, not pregnancies.

Several studies have reflected on the relevance of accuracy of sexual and reproductive information and knowledge. For instance, Agyei et al. (1994) show that in their study, most respondents claimed to have received information on reproductive health. However, the accuracy of these self-assessments was rather poor as a relatively small proportion of the respondents could identify the safe period in a woman’s menstrual cycle. Similarly, in a review of qualitative studies related to access to contraception, Williamson et al. (2009) show that young women were reported in several studies to have inaccurate perceptions of risks to get pregnant and to not fully comprehend the implications of the monthly cycle. For instance, some were under the belief that infrequent sex or sex in specific positions would inhibit a pregnancy (Castle, 2003; Rasch et al., 2000; Nguyen, Liamputtong, & Murphy 2006; Otoide, Oronsaye, & Okonofua, 2001; Richter & Mlambo, 2005; Wood & Jewkes, 2006). Another important point emerging from the data is the distinction made by participants between information of ‘technicalities’ and education on responsible behaviors. Hence, there is substantive potential to enhance the way sexual education is implemented to connect it more to people and behaviors instead of treating the issues as outside of young peoples’ realities.

One poor woman (with pregnancy experience) refers to the idea that information or sexual education at one specific moment in life may not necessarily be enough. She emphasizes the importance of renewing the information constantly. This is an interesting suggestion, since it would not only ensure having the most up-to-date knowledge, but more importantly, it would bring the topic ‘top of mind’ more regularly. On the ‘charlas’ specifically, there was some concern

that these workshops may address young women too late—namely, after their sexual initiation. This constitutes a significant risk since the timing of having access to information matters. Finkel and Finkel (1975) show, for instance, that sex education programs offered in high school come too late for these youths. Earlier outreach of these programs could be more effective in preventing early pregnancies, according to the authors. In my study, some interviewees stated they had her first exposure to information on sexual and reproductive health issues only after they moved in with their partner.

Gender norms that emphasize the ‘purity’ of young unmarried women and their entry into marriage as virgins leads to a tabooization of sex and hence, an avoidance of sexual information. These norms are often enforced by others, who exclude young unmarried women from opportunities to access information. They can also be internalized, and this is reflected when young women make no efforts to learn more because they feel ashamed and guilty. Some participants (poor without pregnancy experience) stated very affirmatively they are not “interested in sex” as they would only have relations once married. This reflects very well other findings of women accessing health services and information about sexuality only after they got married. The disapproval of premarital sexual activity among women blocks their access to knowledge and information, which constitutes a severe problem. Actively pursuing information to better protect themselves may be a suspicious activity and triggers feelings of guilt and shame, as several interviewees explain. Interviewed women often describe their passive behavior with regards to knowledge and information: they only ‘listen’ to information, but they do not actively search for it as one says explicitly. However, several mention that after having a child or getting married, they feel more comfortable to actively pursue information and means to control their fertility. This reveals the tabooization of pre-marriage sexuality and how such taboos undermine women’s capacity to exercise control over it; if there shall be ‘nothing’ in need for control (sex), any sign to do so would reveal that women go against that societal rule and could potentially lead to their stigmatization. The following participant describes that fear before she got married.

*Interviewer: Do you feel that having information about sex is easy or is it difficult for you to get it?*

*O: At the moment ... well, now not anymore, because as I already know, I can ask a nurse ...*

*Interviewer: But when you did not know, do you think that for a young teenager it is difficult to get information?*

*O: Yes, because I did not want people to think that I was already going crazy, or if I ask someone, they would think maybe the girl wants something with someone, I do not know. (woman, P/NP)*

An important finding is that while access to information is possible but clearly constrained before they enter a union, this changes significantly afterwards. The association of this observed phenomenon with the tabooization of premarital sex is evident. Unmarried girls should not be too interested in issues related to sexuality—after they are married, such interest is more acceptable.

Likewise, access to reproductive health services most often happens only once they are married (or pregnant), but not before. Early access to health services would help deepen their access to

quality information and enable them to use this knowledge to make informed decisions. This is aligned with other research, which has found that in several developing countries, young women perceived services to be catered principally for married women and had significant fears of receiving a negative reception from clinic staff (Rasch et al., 2000; Kiluvia & Tembele, 1991; Otoide, Oronsaye, & Okonofua, 2001; Richter & Mlambo, 2005; Wood & Jewkes, 2006). Adolescent girls may feel that when attempting to get contraceptives with public health clinics, they will subject themselves to judgement and negative attitudes from health personnel and possibly, the community if not confidentially treated (Gorgen et al., 1993; Berglund et al., 1997; Senderowitz, 1997).

In general, the discussion of sexual issues is a clear taboo among the poor families in the sample. Mothers usually talk to their daughters about menstruation, but often only after it occurs. On the other hand, they generally do not discuss contraception or other behavioral issues. Strikingly, if parents do give advice on sexual issues, it is usually specific rules on what not to do. Essentially, messages by several parents tend to support abstinence. With regards to sexual education though, research shows that programs that promote abstinence until marriage, while withholding information about contraceptive methods, do not stop or delay sex. Moreover, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs can actually place young people at increased risk of pregnancy and STDs (Guttmacher Institute, 2017). Some parents are openly opposed the provision of sexual education and information either through NGOs or the school. They forbid their daughters to take part in the above mentioned charlas, and some are very outspoken about their frustration when schools provide sex education classes, according to the interviewees. They discourage their daughters from engaging in pursuing such knowledge and, in that way contribute to the tabooization.

*Interviewer: And why did you not look for more information, at school they did not tell you about sexuality?*

*O: Of course, but not openly, who knows ... once I remember that when I was in the first year some girls were talking about it, they were talking about condoms, pills, things to protect themselves, and I was telling my mom and she says: "What a barbarity, not even in the schools they have the respect to not talk about it", then I never dared to ask her anything because I felt ashamed ... (woman, P/P)*

In several of the interviews, it becomes clear that having a person to talk to and discuss doubts with is of fundamental value. Despite that, most of the poor young women do not have anyone to talk about this subject. Some mention some brief discussions with friends, but overall, the topic is a taboo, no matter who they talk to. Very few talk to family members. Talking to parents can be particularly uncomfortable, and in addition, some parents may also lack information themselves. One woman learned about sexuality at school with her teacher. When following up with her parents, she felt very uncomfortable because she realized how uncomfortable her mother was speaking about the subject. The mother is from a remote rural area, and the interviewee suspects that she has very little knowledge about sexuality herself. For many, their partner is the first person they talk to more in-depth about sexuality and often, the only one.



Parents' positive involvement in their children's lives (including the dimensions of relationships and sexuality) is important though. Research in sociology, economics and public health has studied how parents influence their children's sexual behavior and their risk of early childbearing. For instance, Brooks and Murphey (1999) show that although pregnancy prevention programs do not typically focus on the family as a point of intervention, parents may have a powerful effect on adolescent sexual behavior. Also, Plotnick (1992) finds that attitudes and values about family and gender roles significantly influence the likelihood of teenage pregnancy. Finally, Kahn and Anderson (1992) show that mothers who have experienced early first births may influence their children's fertility behavior through a role model effect: either directly, through positive messages of starting a family early or indirectly, by having permissive attitudes towards early marriage. Such intergenerational effects have also been confirmed in Rios-Neto and Miranda-Ribbeiro (2009).

There are some poor women (both with and without pregnancy experience) who proactively look out for additional information when they remain unsatisfied with the information they received through some of the initial channels. However, these are very few. Given the negative associations with the active pursuit of information on sex and the stigmatization of girls who are involved in or just obviously showing interest in sex, young women who are not effectively reached through institutions such as schools or NGOs have very few options to equip themselves with the necessary information to make informed decisions. While generally these patterns hold for both poor groups—those with and those without pregnancy experience—a slight difference can be observed. Among those without pregnancy experience, there are a few striking exceptional cases of women who do not build all their information on a single entry-point, such as NGOs or schools as the case for most poor with pregnancy experience. They explicitly mention their interest, and their active efforts to 'look for more'—no sense of stigma can be perceived here. This attitude of wanting to take control over things is not present among the poor with pregnancy experiences.

The following poor participant did not experience a pregnancy in her adolescence and generally exercises control over her life in different spheres (she will be referred to as an exceptional example throughout the following sections). She explains her profound interest and drive to learn more, understand more profoundly, and be better prepared. It becomes very clear from her statement how curious she is to learn and understand and how she proactively tries to improve her knowledge.

*D: Well, I've always liked to read a lot, I've always liked to read about sexually transmitted infections, diseases and all that, also about births and pregnancies, complications and what happens in the pregnancy. At school we talked a lot about that, even when I was in third year, Tania was still studying and she was quite into it with another boy and they also gave talks, I think there were two occasions in which she talked about diseases and all that. I was involved in the Sandinista Youth and four times they held these talks to us youth, women and men, about unwanted pregnancies, contraceptive methods and all that, I always liked to be on the lookout because I thought someday I am going to have sex with a man and at that moment I want to know what is good for my*

*body, because the pills sometimes do not work for anyone, the organism of each one is different, so I liked to read a lot and the talks they gave us. (woman, NP/P).*

Those who proactively pursue additional information have family, friends, and acquaintances who provide them with information or knowledge. While this is certainly an exception and not the rule, even among those without pregnancy experience, it is in some ways consistent with a striking finding in a qualitative study in Brazil on the issue of youth out of work and out of education (Machado & Muller, 2018): when comparing youth out of work and of school from poor urban neighborhoods with ‘achievers’ from the same communities, the single most striking difference between the two groups is the personal support systems available to them. The successful ones can often pool from many different sources at the same time, and each of those complements the others. While parents are a key source of information, they are not the only one. Also, friends and peers provide important support, insight, and knowledge to some young women who are not socially isolated as many among the poor are.

Another interesting hypothesis emerging from the data is that access to information may vary by gender. Both poor men and women share the thought that boys are likely to know more about sexual and reproductive health issues, since they feel less shame in asking. Also, it is probably more tolerated and socially acceptable for boys to talk about sex than for girls to be doing so. Again, this strongly relates to gender norms that stigmatize female, but not male, premarital sex.

The middle-class women (both with and without pregnancy experience) had significantly better access to information. They not only seemed to have more in-depth discussions in their schools compared to the poor, but more importantly, most of them had family members they could talk to about their concerns and questions. Middle-class women specifically referred to their mothers as a very important source of information and trust. Beyond information sharing, mothers proactively seem to seek the discussion and exchange with their daughters about sex and contraception. Several mentioned their mothers made appointments at the gynecologist to have a check-up and get contraception. Rather than promoting abstinence, the more common approach among the middle-class seems to be to try to actively protect girls from unsafe sex. In these families, the first discussions about sex, contraception, menstruation, and the human reproductive system, in general, happen much earlier compared to the poor. The following participant talked about sex to her mother at the age of four or five. Her mother used a very child-adequate book in that context, she says. She clearly remembers to date these discussions, which speaks to the detail and attention her mother dedicated to that conversation. Furthermore though, the discussion went beyond the description of the reproductive system. Strikingly, and different from the stories heard from poor participants, this interviewee explains her learning process and the central role her mother played in that.

*L: Eeeeh, well, the truth, obviously when I was between 4 and 5 years old I asked her where the children came from, right, so my mom did what a cool mom does, she bought me a book, right, which was called sex education for children from 3 to 6 years, an incredible book, I mean, it was very beautiful, very frank and very suitable for*

*the age. (...) Then my knowledge about sexuality afterwards was clinical*

*Interviewer: (Laughter)*

*L: So, when I was about 8 years old, I knew what a clitoris is, I did not know very well why it was cool, but I knew it existed.*

*Interviewer: (...) And feminism has helped me a lot to realize other things, but in that sense my mom was always very open to the kind of questions I asked when I was about 8 years old. I asked her what a condom was after we were in the car and we had heard an advertisement of 'Vive' condoms. So me: What is a condom? Then my dad was very uncomfortable because he is from another time, but my mom has always been very open and easy with all those things. Then my mom explained to me at that moment that sometimes people do not have sex to reproduce, but because it is cool and they like it. Then in that moment I could not think why someone may enjoy something so utilitarian, but she told me then, well, that this was a device that the man puts on his penis to have sex and so that the woman does not get pregnant and then that was like my introduction to contraceptive methods. (woman, MC/NP)*

The quotation clearly shows how the issue is not being treated from an abstinence perspective, but from one that aims to provide the young woman with complete knowledge and with positive aspects of sexuality, emphasizing also aspects of pleasure and joy beyond reproduction. The mother also played a fundamental role in several references of middle-class women as to how they were sexually educated. The personal support system at home is crucial because it can complement what is provided in school, which may or may not be of good quality. Also, it clearly has an advantage over other less private spaces where some questions cannot easily be addressed.

Additionally, some middle-class women also share experiences in school that are substantially different from the ones shared by the poor. The private school that one participant attended provided information that in her view was very adequate, comprehensive and “advanced,” she states. Finally, the combination of progressive schools and a proactive mother who has no hesitation in discussing the subject matter is something also shared by other middle-class interviewees. Several middle-class women describe being exposed to a context that deals with sexuality with openness and proactive engagement and in which taboos are absent or rare at most. One interviewee explicitly distinguishes the way these topics are discussed and treated in her social environment (middle-class and progressive) compared to social groups: in rural areas, or even among same income-level groups that attend different schools. Hence, she acknowledges that some women may be more privileged in the sense that they are able to learn and experience sexuality in ways that are likely not accessible for the majority of women in Nicaragua—herself being one of those privileged ones. Importantly, both poor and middle-class women in rural areas seem to share more traditional gender norms framed around Christian morale and values as the following citation shows:

*Y: Yes, the context changes when talking to other types of people, or in rural areas, or in other schools. For example, my cousin told me that she studied in León in the Purity of Mary that there they never touched a sexuality issue, or a topic of protection in the entire school and then they paraded with bellies as if they had been hired to be there, in my school the topic of sexuality was treated very openly, very clearly and in the history of the*

*school there have been like two pregnant women nothing more. So, what can I tell you? I think it is good to treat the issue openly, but the access depends on your context. (woman, MC/NP)*

This speaks to the fact that the ability to receive complete information is perceived as a privilege and not taken for granted. In general, even if they have received in-depth information, knowledge does not necessarily translate into reflective behavior. Some young women state they had information and knowledge but they simply did ‘not think’ about getting pregnant. Having been exposed to information and knowledge and using this knowledge in their daily lives are clearly two distinct processes. Some young women explain that in the sexual encounter they did not have top of mind what they learned in school or in the ‘charlas’.

*Y: ...in one ear it enters and it comes out of the other, when you have this... One does not keep anything, nothing, one just remains in the same, one listens and everything, but one continues in the same. That's when I got pregnant with the girl. (woman, P/P)*

## 6.2 Availability and effective access to contraception

While estimations differ in magnitude, experts agree that a significant share of maternal deaths could be prevented if access to contraception in developing countries were more effective. Cleland et al. (2006) estimate that effective contraception could likely prevent a third of maternal deaths. More recently, WHO (2014) estimated three-fourths of unsafe abortions could be prevented by improved access to modern contraception. In many countries, contraceptive prevalence increased among adolescents in the past 20 years, often even faster than among older women. At the same time, adolescent contraceptive use is characterized by shorter periods of consistency and by higher likelihood of experiencing contraceptive failure following Blanc et al. (2009) analysis of DHS data for 40 countries.

It is obvious that adolescent pregnancy reduction largely relates to increased and more effective contraceptive use. In the United States, the reduction in teenage pregnancy has been associated clearly with improved contraceptive use (Santelli et al., 2007). Besides knowledge and information use, the lack of availability of contraceptives is another possible barrier towards effective contraceptive. Even when contraceptives might be theoretically available, effective access can be difficult for adolescents due to a number of barriers they encounter. Adolescents may feel shame and fear to receive them out of the hand of an adult. For instance, women interviewed for a qualitative study in Paraguay and Peru were mostly aware of reproductive health clinics, but did not visit them due to embarrassment or fear of social exclusion (Näslund-Hadley & Binstock, 2010). In this study, some poor women with pregnancy experience have never used contraception at all before pregnancy. Others did not use any for quite a while when already sexually active. While the reasons behind that finding include a lack of information or incomplete information as mentioned before, other barriers seem to be more important and to result in more powerful constraints as will be seen.

Several young women refer to ‘operations’ (sterilization) as a possibility they are aiming to pursue once they reach the legal age for it (25 years in Nicaragua). This is an invasive measure but still considered part of the set of options among the poor—it was not mentioned a single time in the interviews with middle-class participants. However, these seems to be rather rare cases. Most interviewees state they first used condoms and then, switched to the pill or to monthly injections. Among the poor, the monthly injections are the predominant form of contraceptive method used. Condoms on the other hand are perceived primarily as a measure to prevent STDs. Once they are in a relationship with a partner, interviewees switch to another form of contraceptive. It seems there is a strong lack of awareness on the importance of preventing both, pregnancies and STDs. STDs seem to be of rather low concern for most interviewees. Relatedly, there seems to be no immediate need in their view to prevent STDs and hence, no need to use condoms when in a relationship. Relatedly, Manlove, Ryan, and Franzetta (2007) cite a body of evidence which shows that condom use is more common with casual sexual partners than with more steady or serious partners (Cooper & Orcutt, 2000; Ku et al., 1998; Noar, Zimmerman, and Atwood, 2004; Santelli et al., 1996; Sheeran, Abraham, and Orbell, 1999; Stark et al., 1998). Similarly, Williamson et al. (2009) find that although often more accessible than hormonal methods, condom use was associated with promiscuity in a number of qualitative studies the authors reviewed. Consequently, young women often relied on traditional methods.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, the inconsistency in usage seems to be a central issue among many of the interviewees, particularly among those who do not decide for or against a pregnancy. The lack of such consistency is not only observable among the poor with pregnancy experience, but also quite common among the poor without pregnancy experience. Several do claim they only did not use contraception at first sex, but then tried to use some form of contraception but also inconsistently at times. Several women tried unsuccessfully to avoid having a baby and mentioned contraceptive failures to explain their pregnancy. However, contraceptive failure is quite an unlikely phenomenon. Overall, it is more likely that ‘contraceptive failure’ is due to inconsistent use, which becomes revealed in some interviews. Hence, such statements may signal uninformed use of contraception, or it may be a way for a woman to find an explanation that would go beyond her own control (and possibly beyond their responsibility). Interestingly, though, in the case of interviews that went deeper into exploring the concept of ‘contraceptive failure,’ these deeper insights into contraceptive use bring out the lack of clear knowledge and at times, lead to discoveries of discrepancies between immediate answers and actual practice. Some clearly insinuate that the reason behind inconsistent use was that incentives for not getting pregnant were not high enough. For instance, one poor interviewee with pregnancy experience says she sometimes did not follow up to get her injection at the health center on time, for instance, when the center was too full and she would have to wait for longer than she wanted. Others admit that while using contraception sometimes, other times when ‘in the middle of things,’ they would not think about it or that they just have no explanation as to why they missed using their contraceptive of choice regularly.

Access to contraceptives is clearly restricted by the same tabooization that was discussed earlier as one of the main barriers to more and better information. A young unmarried woman that tries to access contraception is doing so because she is engaging in sexual activity, which is a taboo. Hence, to avoid judgement and stigmatization, young women have to find secret ways to access contraception or they do not access contraception at all.

Very few of the young poor women had contact with public health services before getting pregnant. In most cases observed, only after getting pregnant will they become patients or make use of the health posts. Access at an earlier point would be important for effective prevention, but attending these facilities would potentially make engagement in sexual activity more publicly noticeable. Once it is clear that they are 'women' (either pregnant or mothers), it is acceptable to access sexual and reproductive care, but not when they are still 'girls.' Moreover, this is a prevalent perception among staff at health facilities it seems. One young woman elaborates on her intimidating experience at a health center where she was not effectively attended because of her young age. Finally, women's control over contraceptive use is also limited by their overall capacity to make decisions within the couple relative to their partner. Power dynamics in couples may lead to men controlling if and which contraceptives are being used (this aspect will be discussed more in-depth in Chapter 7).

As mentioned earlier knowledge does not necessarily translate into use of contraception. Similarly, availability of contraceptives is not equivalent to effective access for everyone. Earlier analyses of data from the DHS had shown consistently high levels of knowledge about contraceptive methods among adolescents in developing countries, especially in Asia, northern and southern Africa, and Latin America, but relatively low levels of contraceptive use (Curtis & Neitzel, 1996). This discrepancy has drawn attention to adolescents' behaviors and perceptions about contraceptives and what determines effective access. Research shows that a multitude of factors can contribute to improved contraceptive use. Kirby (2001) analyzes about 300 studies on risk and protective factors for adolescent sexual risk-taking. Not surprisingly, the author identifies hundreds of different risk and protective factors related to different domains: community, family, and personal factors. Cubbin et al. (2005) find neighborhood context to be modestly associated with the sexual initiation of adolescents. However, that study finds no evidence for an association between contraceptive use and neighborhood characteristics. Conversely, Kirby (2001) finds community characteristics (low levels of education, of employment and income as well as crime and violence rates) to be associated with higher rates of adolescent pregnancy (Kirby, 2001). More than community characteristics, family characteristics seem to be important predictors of contraceptive behavior. Santelli et al. (2000) using a U.S. based, nationally representative survey of adolescents show that parental education is an important predictor of teenagers' sexual behavior (Santelli et al., 2000). Beyond education level achieved by parents, family dynamics and attachment also play an important role (Kirby, 2001). If parents supervise and monitor their children, and if the adolescents feel connected to their parents, they are less likely to engage in sexual risk-taking according to this review of

evidence. Interestingly, greater attachment to family is associated with later initiation of sex, less frequent intercourse, greater use of contraception, lower pregnancy, and childbearing rates (Kirby, 2001). In addition, Furstenberg (1971) found evidence to support the relationship between parental support and contraceptive use in his teenage sample. Biddlecom et al. (2009) used nationally representative surveys collected in 2004 of 12 to 19-year-olds in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Malawi, and Uganda. The authors found parental monitoring not associated with contraceptive use at last sex, whereas parent-child communication was associated with such use among Ghanaian females and among Ugandan adolescents of both genders. In all countries, adolescent males who reported low monitoring were at elevated risk of having had sex in the last year. For women, this was true for three of the countries. Thompson and Spanier (1978) found that peer influences seem to be far more influential compared to parental influences in regard to premarital sexual behavior in both young males and females. The authors cite other research which supports this finding (Glass, 1972; Kaats & Davis, 1970; Spanier, 1976). Relatedly, peers' norms and behavior regarding sex and contraceptive use is a dimension prominently highlighted in Kirby's (2001) review of the evidence.

Several factors at the individual level are associated with the likelihood of contraceptive use. One of those is younger age at the time of sexual initiation, which reduces the likelihood of contraceptive use (Manlove, Ryan, & Franzetta, 2007). Knowledge and the depth and accuracy of knowledge are also important determinants. For instance, a study in Burkina Faso finds that the reluctance to use modern methods stemmed from a fear that contraception may cause infertility and that the contraceptive pill specifically might produce damaging side effects (Gorgen et al., 1993). Misconceptions and wrong beliefs about contraceptive use negatively determined contraceptive use among adolescents in a study in Mexico City (Pick de Weiss et al., 1991). Resonating with my own findings, empowerment measures proved to be associated with contraceptive use in a study by Do and Kurimoto (2012), who used DHS data for Namibia, Zambia, Ghana, and Uganda. They find positive associations between the overall empowerment score and contraceptive method use. In all countries but Ghana, women's overall empowerment score was positively associated with both female and couple method use.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, relationship characteristics are also found to be associated with contraceptive use. Manlove, Ryan, and Franzetta (2007) cite a set of evidence, which relates the age of the partner to a number of outcomes. Having a much older partner is associated with reduced contraceptive use and consistency (Abma, Driscoll, & Moore, 1998; Ford, Sohn, & Lepkowski, 2001; Glei, 1999; Manlove, Ryan, & Franzetta, 2003), reduced condom use (DiClemente et al., 2002; Ford et al., 2001; Miller, Clark, & Moore, 1997), and a greater likelihood of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) (Ford & Lepkowski, 2004). Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a nationally representative school-based survey of U.S. students in grades 7–12 Manlove, Ryan, & Franzetta (2007) show that adolescents with more-intimate relationships

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<sup>81</sup> Couple methods included male and female condoms, the diaphragm, foam, jelly, withdrawal, the lactational amenorrhea method and periodic abstinence—that is, methods that require at least the awareness of and a certain degree of support and cooperation from husbands.

and who communicate about contraception before sex have greater odds of contraceptive use. The same authors cite evidence according to which communication with a partner before first sex has shown to be associated with actual contraceptive use and consistency (Manlove et al., 2003, 2004). This is in agreement with findings by Davies et al. (2006), who analyzed data from a dedicated survey applied to nonpregnant African-American girls aged 14–18 years who reported sexual activity. The authors show that adolescents who were inconsistent contraceptive users at follow-up were more likely to have reported less frequent communication with their partners about prevention issues. These findings are supported by other studies linking contraceptive use with the ability to discuss sexual topics with sex partners (Shrier, Goodman, & Emans 1999; Whitaker et al., 1999). Hence, this indicates that norms that discourage open discussions about sex and contraceptive use fail to protect adolescents from unwanted pregnancies (Johnson, Carey, Marsh, et al., 2003). Still related to relationship characteristics, Thompson and Spanier (1978) find the frequency and regularity of intercourse to contribute to effective contraception by making the need for contraceptive protection more salient and making coital-unrelated methods more appropriate.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, current contraception use levels are higher among married teens if compared to unmarried teenagers (Blanc & Way, 1998). This is a very important finding and may point to the importance of constraints experienced by adolescents in accessing and using contraceptives given societal stigmatization of premarital sexual engagement. Several qualitative studies have pointed to social norms that condemn female premarital sexual activity and how adolescents internalize those, feeling their reputation threatened when engaging in premarital sexual activity (Castle, 2003; Nguyen, Liamputtong, & Murphy, 2006; Otoide, Oronsaye, & Okonofua, 2001; Kiluva & Tembele, 1991; Rasch et al., 2000; Richter & Mlambo, 2005; Wood & Jewkes, 2006). Relatedly, Bell's (2009) research on young parenthood in rural England demonstrates that embarrassment is a fundamental risk factor in young people's sexual behavior. The study shows how protective behaviour can be significantly restricted by adolescents' fear of being embarrassed. Finally, Thompson and Spanier (1978) find that fear that parents may discover one's sexual activity can be a barrier to contraceptive use for both males and females use.

### 6.3 Discussion

The main conclusion from this chapter is that a lack of adequate sexual information, knowledge, and availability of contraceptives can function as barriers to effective pregnancy prevention. At the same time, none of these factors seem to be at the root cause of the phenomenon. Information may be incomplete or not perfectly accurate according to the interviewees, but it seems that in almost none of the cases studied here, the main barrier to effective control was rooted in a lack of knowledge. With regard to contraception, the main finding is that different means are available to young people, but young people, and poor women in particular, face a combination of barriers that prevent them from effectively accessing and using contraception.



Thus, availability of sexual information and contraception do not necessarily lead to intended fertility outcomes among young women, precisely because effective access to both seems hampered by social norms around women's purity (among other factors as analyzed before). The following chapters will analyze more in-depth which societal and context-related factors influence the making of these choices and decisions.

## 7 Gender and teenage pregnancy: Norms around women's (and men's) roles in relationships, families, and society more broadly

Social norms are essential to understanding the context in which individuals make decisions. They define what is appropriate and desirable for men on the one hand and for women on the other. Social norms are imposed by continuous sanctioning of divergent behaviors and rewarding of conforming ones. As discussed earlier, gender norms shape beliefs and behaviors—they influence what one assumes others are expecting and what others likely will do (Bicchieri, 2006). Hence, what an individual will do is not exclusively based on his or her preferences, but also on his or her expectations of the others' behaviors. Gender roles are learned through observation and are socially enforced: girls and boys learn these rules at very early ages through interactions with family, peers, community members, and the media. Social norms play an important role in shaping and enforcing the choices and decisions of women and men as well as more broadly, gender equality outcomes (World Bank, 2012d).

In a regional study on teenage pregnancy in Latin America, Azevedo et al. (2012) show that traditional gender roles seem to be strongly associated with teenage motherhood. The authors refer to a dedicated survey conducted with youth in Ecuador according to which teenage mothers agreed with stronger gender and sexual stereotypes compared to peers who were not mothers. The data collected in Nicaragua conversely shows how gender roles manifest themselves and how they influence fertility outcomes. The following chapter will analyze how gender norms and roles determine the way young women experience their sexuality, the way in which they can (or cannot) make decisions regarding their sexual life and, relatedly, their fertility. Second, it will then shed light on the role gender norms play in shaping aspirations and specifically, women's life plans. Third, it will discuss the way gender roles influence how relationships are structured in complementary, and as we will see, hierarchical, ways.

### 7.1 Gender norms and sexual behavior: the passive, asexual woman

In many cultures, sexual activity is stigmatized for girls, but not so for boys. For instance, too much knowledge about sex-related issues can be considered inappropriate for women (Klugman et al., 2014). This point is well-reflected in the previous chapter with girls claiming to not have any interest in more knowledge or with others reporting they suffered from repressions when trying to learn more. Similarly, Thompson and Spanier (1978) cite research showing that young men consistently perceive more approval and support for their sexual activities than do young women. Also, Gage (1998) in a comprehensive literature review documents how adolescent girls' decision-making is limited in many cultural contexts, specifically with regard to sexual activity. Since gender roles in many contexts reinforce male control over women's lives more generally, and over their bodies specifically, sex may be governed by men's interests and needs (Balmer et al., 1995; Miles, 1993; Obbo, 1993; Ssekiboobo, 1992; Strebel, 1996).

The expectation that women should be 'asexual' impacts their access to information, their access to contraception, and finally, their overall capacity to take control over the sexual encounter. Being prepared for sex (for instance, using contraception or carrying condoms) has shown to be associated with being ready for sex or with being sexually available (Gage, 1998). As discussed previously, access to sexual information is significantly less difficult and burdensome for boys if compared to girls: They share that access to information and knowledge is not complicated. Furthermore, they are given more spaces in which to talk to other people about it, exchange ideas, and learn informally. This is due to the fact that male sexuality is less connoted with stigma and tabooization. While men interviewed for this study also claim that there is a strong taboo to talk about sex within the family, they overwhelmingly say they learned useful information from personal exchanges with friends. Talking about sex and sharing experiences with friends is not at all a taboo among males, it seems, while girls seem to barely talk to anyone about their doubts, concerns, and actual experiences. Women are not supposed to engage in sex proactively, but moreover, they are not supposed to learn more about it or to prepare themselves for it by accessing contraception. This translates oftentimes in their exacerbated dependence from men to do so for them: to get the contraceptives and to teach them things about sex they did not know. The following poor interviewee explains how access to contraception was possible for her partner, but not for herself.

*Interviewer: Why was it him who brought the pills? Instead of going to ... Are there health centers?*

*I: Yes. Yes. Well. First, because if I went to a health center and people that know me would see that I am looking for contraceptives they would tell my mom and that would be a problem. (woman, P/P)*

As mentioned in several key informant interviews and also emerging in the individual in-depth interviews with women, proactive sexual engagement for women is a taboo in Nicaraguan society. Premarital sex is particularly stigmatized, as clearly observed in previous chapters. This social norm is quite strong and expressed through different channels in the data: sex belongs into marriage. Unmarried women who have sex are not conforming to this rule and may experience 'punishment.' They are stigmatized and judged by the community, according to the interviewees. On the other hand, women who have sex as adolescents are expected to get married or form a union. Thus, premarital sexual engagement is a strong driver of early marriage, according to the interviewees. One poor young woman (with pregnancy experience) explains how she moved out of her parents' house immediately after she had sex with her boyfriend out of respect for her parents. Another woman expresses how marriage and sexual engagement are deeply intertwined and almost inseparable.

*F: Well, they [her parents] teach us that if I'm not ready for marriage I'm not ready to have a boyfriend, to start a relationship I have to be ready for that. (woman, P/NP)*

The societal tabooization of premarital sex that several interviewees refer to in their discussions leads to feelings of guilt and shame among those who do engage in sex before finding themselves in a stable union or marriage. Furthermore though, that same tabooization can turn into one of

the main barriers for effective pregnancy prevention, when young women avoid planning contraception because of feelings of guilt. One young woman exemplified this view: Each time after having sex, she felt so guilty that she convinced herself she would never do it again. For her, planning contraception would have felt like “planning the sin,” thus, making it even more sinful, which is why she never used it.

When exploring in-depth the stigma and judgement young poor mothers report to have suffered, it seems that the main dimension that was criticized in their families and communities was not necessarily the pregnancy per se, or the specific age at which it occurred, but rather the absence of a union or marriage at the time that the pregnancy occurred. Poor young women reproduce these stigmatizations and judgements towards others. Those without pregnancy experience strongly express their disapproval of early pregnancies outside unions. Also, the teenage mothers interviewed for the study who have had their child in a marriage or union are very vocal about the difference between their own cases and those of women who have their children out of wedlock. Oftentimes, they seem to judge teenage pregnancies in others without associating their own story to the ones they are referring to in a negative way. Relatedly, Khader (2009) makes an interesting point: She suggests that the idea that higher-order preferences are less adaptive if compared to first-order preferences is misleading. Instead, she claims that peoples’ descriptions of motivations for their individual behavior often do reflect social norms, independent of whether their own behavior is not in line with these norms actually. The following quotation exemplifies the connection several young poor women (including those with pregnancy experience themselves) make between teenage pregnancies and young women behaving improperly. All of the examples are from young unmarried women, and the notion that they may have sexually engaged with several men (as mentioned in the following example) is quite present.

*Interviewer: Do you know people close to you who became pregnant or parents before 19 years of age?*

*H: Yes.*

*Interviewer: Why did they get pregnant?*

*H: Maybe because they slacked off more than I did. There is one who really got into some mess. She was a bit of a slacker, more than me. She went to parties at night. Later, with time, we realized that she was pregnant and I asked her - did you get married? - when I look at her with the belly. No, she tells me -I'm pregnant-, -and the dad? -, -I do not know who he is-. She told the boy she was going out with, but he did not believe that it was his. Now she is working to get her child ahead. (woman, P/P)*

In the general discourse, girls are usually held responsible for “taking care” of themselves. They are the ones who have to ensure they remain ‘pure’, they keep their virginity and conversely, they suffer the burden of consequences should they not succeed in doing so, according to the interviewees. In contrast to men, women are the ones who need to “make themselves respected,” according to several poor participants of both sexes, and they generally are the ones held responsible if sexual activity outside of a union occurs. Key informants interviewed for this study confirm that girls in Nicaragua grow up learning that they have to suppress sexuality and conserve their virginity as long as possible. For boys, this is not the case: men’s active sexuality is something

accepted as normal and natural. Research in Mexico (Stern, 2007) has shown similar results. While boys perceive their sexuality as a natural instinct that confirms their masculinity and brings respect from their peers, girls learn to control their sexuality to become respected persons.

Virginity is perceived as an important good and resource, as several poor women report. Many of the poor women who have not yet been sexually active generally plan to have sex in a marriage or union only.

*Interviewer: And how did you decide to have sex?*

*F: It was hard, because I was afraid of losing my virginity.*

*Interviewer: Why were you afraid?*

*F: Because I thought that was the most valuable thing that I had. It is the most valuable thing that an adolescent girl has and when one already gets to marry, one shares it; but also important that the partner knows what he's doing because that hurts. It hurts when you are having sex, when you are losing your virginity. (woman, P/P)*

Among the poor specifically, sexual activity of women is associated with becoming an adult. Several young poor women actually refer to the idea of not being a 'señorita' anymore as soon as they had sex. The term 'señora' would be more appropriate, according to these voices. This is a clear signal that adolescence and sexual activity do not belong together, but that instead, sexual activity is a marker of adulthood.

Studies on adolescent sexuality in different parts of the world show that young people's premarital sexual encounters are often unplanned and sporadic. The same is found by researchers in Nicaragua (Zelaya et al., 1997; Castillo Aramburu, 2005; Antillion, 2012). Sexual encounters tend to happen spontaneously and often in public spaces. While lack of preparation may be unsurprising for a first sexual engagement, subsequent ones were often somewhat different, as stated in several stories. Several of the women reported feeling guilty for engaging in pre-marital sex due to religious teachings and parental guidance. Stevens-Simon and Sheeder (2004) argue that the strong moral prohibitions against pre-marital sex make planning and preventive measures to avoid STDs and pregnancies almost impossible, a statement supported by the findings of this study. Preparing for sexual activity would amount to premeditation and make the 'mistake' even worse. One middle-class participant related that she used contraceptives inconsistently when in school because she felt so much guilt about having sex. She did not plan because she was sure she was never going to do it again. The reports of several poor women when speaking about why they would not take any precautionary measures to prevent a pregnancy resonate with these feelings of guilt when planning contraception.

Societal monitoring of women's behavior is not limited to sex though. Women participants, whether poor or middle-class, with or without pregnancy experience, feel that communities and society monitor women's behavior much more closely than men's. Women can be stigmatized if they neglect their house or their care duties, if they have multiple relationships or change partners

frequently, or even just if they are spending a lot of time outside the house. Women should also be rather passive and silent. Standing up for one's opinions is socially sanctioned in women, but not so in men. The following interviewee eloquently explains how women's behaviors at the community level are sanctioned, contrary to a range of men's behaviors which seem to be widely accepted.

*Interviewer: What kind of things do women do that are highly criticized? Are there things that women do in your community that the community starts talking about badly?*

*K: Yes, I think it's pretty similar at the municipal level or at my neighborhood level, it's typical, because a girl who already has a boyfriend that's because she's crazy, that's because she already wants it, so they're saying very derogatory things, for example – she is in heat down there -in reference to the vagina, that she already wants to have sex and always downplaying responsibility that adolescent boys and men have, so, kids say this with respect to the irresponsible sexuality that even couples have because of many things ... The girls leave their homes, here we say they leave, they plan with the boyfriend, or the lover, to escape secretly, then always the responsible one for that is the girl the crazy one, the one who was pushing him was the girl. Even, there is a saying that is widely used that says "tie your chickens since my roosters are running loose." That means that it is always us women who have to make ourselves respected, who have to take care of ourselves, they say that we say how far men can go. So even if there is a raped girl, a raped woman, a sexually abused child, they say, she probably provoked it, or she let it happen. (woman, P/P)*

Young women interviewed (and across different groups) broadly agree that society judges and stigmatizes women's behavior strongly and that this is not the case for men. At the same time, men interviewed for the study also identify a number of issues for which men are criticized. However, those are all actual legal offenses, such as gang membership, drug abuse, or committing domestic or other forms of violence. The only socially unaccepted behavior mentioned in men, which does not constitute a legal offense, is idleness.

The concrete manifestations of a lack of women's agency in sexual encounters are related to more general gendered associations, roles, and stereotypes about women. The qualitative data collected for this study shows that complementary gender roles are prevalent among participants and that they shape their sexual behavior and specifically, the control individuals can exercise, with different implications for men and women. Gender norms limit not only women's access to information, but also their effective use and control of contraception. Hence, in light of societal prescriptions of how women and men should behave in public and in private, women may find themselves incapable of making important decisions for themselves. One of the decisions out of their control is the ability to choose under what terms to have sex.

Often poor women with pregnancy experience explain that when they first engaged in sex, they did not feel comfortable doing it. Several young women describe situations in which they were profoundly scared, but at the same time endured what was happening to them. They are passively participating in these first encounters, oftentimes not acting on their intuition to not engage in sex at that moment with that specific partner. Several women express that they felt completely

unprepared for their first sexual encounter. Many also report feelings of shame, guilt, and fear. It happens ‘to them,’ and they seem to have very little or almost no control over the process. At the same time, they do not seem to question it, accepting it as something ‘normal’ or common. Overall, these stories reflect that these young women are not making those decisions, but they accept whichever decision is made by their partners. The first sexual experience often exemplifies how little control the young women, particularly the poor with pregnancy experience, exercise over their bodies. For example, participant A.’s first sexual intercourse occurred after she moved in with her husband at the age of 13. They did not talk about it before. She had never talked to anyone about sex. The following citation describes how she rather passively experiences her first sexual encounter.

*Interviewer: And when you had intercourse you did not know what it was, right? Did you speak with him?*

*A: Yes.*

*Interviewer: And what did you talk about?*

*A: He told me, and what is it, I asked him. Then he told me, it's a common thing, we men do this to women, he says.*

*Interviewer: Men do this to women?*

*A: Yes. Then, he tells me, it is a thing, he tells me that, a thing, how did I just say? I forget this, well a thing that we do. Now well, it is not anymore like before, the first time I did not know, now yes, I already know a little bit. (woman, P/P)*

This situation of lacking control is exacerbated when they have already moved in with their partner, and the women find themselves in a situation of dependence. Sex is often the logical consequence of moving in with a partner as several among the poor women report. Moving in with a partner (the equivalent to a union) means they have to be sexually available to their partner—that is the understanding of the men, but also of several poor women. Once they decided to leave their family of origin and live with their partners, they express that they really had not much of a choice, since sexual engagement is an essential part of living in a union. Some who have not moved in with their partners can also be put under emotional pressure by the partner to prove they love him. However, the vulnerability of those that already live with a man is significantly larger. Several interviewees explain that while they didn’t feel ready for sex, they conceded after their partners openly questioned their levels of affection.

However, women’s discomfort in sexual relations is not always restricted to the first encounter. Also during more mature relationships, men tend to be the ones in control and commonly the ones initiating sex. Of all the poor women, only one spoke about pleasure and having control over sexual engagement. The vast majority described sexual relations as something that happened to them and that they had no active role in controlling. Several of them have very little understanding of sexuality until they move in with a partner and experience what that means. Many of the poor women show accepting attitudes—socially constructed behaviors deemed adequate for women. Their acceptance is often reinforced by power imbalances within the couple, emphasized by the economic roles the partners are playing. It is men who seem to have

the say in all sex-related dimensions: whether, when, and which contraceptive to use. Women participate rather passively in those.

With regard to contraceptive choices and decisions, men tend to be the ones in control as well. Not only are they the ones who go after the contraceptives for the couple according to several reports of the women. Often, they explain men have privileged access to contraceptives due to the women's confinement to the house. This connection between the lack of mobility, the isolation to the private space, and women's overall agency is striking and applies to several other life stories shared in the data in the same way. This is not a trivial point with regard to my research focus. Previous research has shown that when sexual and physical autonomy of the girl is low, she is at higher risk to not use contraception. Jorgensen et al. (1980) showed that 'personal power' in heterosexual relationships is correlated with consistent contraceptive behavior. The young women not only depend on the partners providing them with the contraceptives, they also seem to accept whichever decisions they make regarding the types of contraceptives. In extreme cases, partners decide that the woman shall operate herself as a permanent form of contraception. For instance, one poor woman who had three children already went through the process given the pressure from her partner.

A recurrent example of the lack of girls' sexual autonomy is that men and boys are reported to refuse to use condoms. The most common explanation is that they simply "did not like that," an explanation shared by several young women interviewed. With the exception of one poor woman (without pregnancy experience), none of them reacted to that rejection of their partner and challenged him for it. Condom use is commonly associated with promiscuity. It is not usually perceived to be an adequate contraceptive in a relationship, and both young women and men share this belief. Similarly, research in Africa and Latin America has shown that the lacking capacity of women to convince partners to use a condom reflect attitudes that associate condom use with illicit sex and frequently changing partners (Rao Gupta & Weiss, 1993; Sarkar, 2008). The rejection of condoms is problematic as it may be the easiest contraceptive at hand, making men's refusal to use condoms increase the likelihood of pregnancy since that may mean they are not using any contraception, notwithstanding the need to prevent STDs.

As just discussed, men's overall tendency to be in control over sexual relationships is exacerbated in the ones where women find themselves in extreme dependence on their partners. These relationships are more prevalent among the poor with pregnancies. Such power relations within the couple make it nearly impossible for women to negotiate when or how to have sex with their partners. At the same time, control over sex (the ability to choose and decide when to have sex, with whom, how) is a fundamental reflection of agency. Not only is it of value in and of itself, such capacity also instrumentally determines several other outcomes of well-being.

While the experiences of the sexually active poor without pregnancy experience are similar to a certain extent, there are some cases in which young women have more control. A large share of the poor without pregnancy experience describe somewhat more self-determined first sexual



encounters if compared to the poor without pregnancy experience. One woman, for instance, shares that she took some time to think and decide whether she wanted to have sex with her partner once he suggested it. Also, the following young woman describes her first sex as a mutual agreement. It is noteworthy that she was the one in charge of getting the contraceptives, which is also different from the observations shared earlier concerning the common patterns among the poor groups interviewed.

*Interviewer: How did you and your partner decide to have sex?*

*P: It was a mutual decision.*

*Interviewer: And did you prevent a possible pregnancy?*

*P: Yes, I had to take pills, I got them at the pharmacy. (woman, P/NP)*

In addition, there is one exceptional case of a young poor woman who reports determination to control the terms of sexual activity (see earlier reference to this exceptional case). She not only uses the pill, but since she is conscious that the risk of STDs and pregnancy are different ones, she convinces her partner to use a condom. While he is resistant at first, she insists and explains her position. Finally, she says she would not have sex if he continues his opposition. She ends up ‘educating him’ as she says herself.

*D: I think so, because when I was with him I always told him I do not want to get pregnant, so we see what we do, we talked about how I was going to take care of myself, if I was going to take the pill, or if I was going to inject or if you are going to use a condom, which for me is the best I told him, he got a bit upset because "I do not like it with a condom, I do not like it", but I told him I've never been with anyone, he has a lot of tattoos so I was a bit afraid with all these things about HIV, that with blood and all that, I always told him that for me it is the best if he uses a condom, because some pills prevent a pregnancy if at all because sometimes the pills fail, but they are not going to take care of HIV, you do not know if you have it because you've never done a test, so I get a little scared and he got a bit upset when I said that "what do you think that I am here and there and I do not know what" and he started to tell me, I did not tell him that it was the best, that it was best for me.*

*Interviewer: Then you insisted?*

*D: Yes, I insisted, I insisted and then he, well fine, I do not know, of course, and to be with me, whatever it would take him I guess (laughs) and whenever we were together he used a condom, (...) So I was afraid, because I live in their house and they do not know my boyfriend and if I get pregnant, no and well from whom and if they realized, I always told him that and in the end he did not tell me anything about him using condoms.*

*Interviewer: You educated him.*

*D: I educated him (laughs), exactly. (woman, NP/P)*

This case presents an exception. This young woman is also the only poor woman who describes pleasure and who speaks about her consistently controlling and driving sexual encounters as well. Compared to the other reports, she speaks openly about these experiences, which highlights even more her view of relationships and sex that differs significantly from the ones the majority (among the poor) shared in the interviews. This young woman is an example of a ‘resilient child.’ As will be discussed in Chapter 9, resilient children are those that are capable to adapt to adversity

(Werner & Smith, 1992). Despite this woman's exposure to an adverse context, similar to the one that the other young women interviewed are exposed to, she exemplifies the argument that agency is not determined by structure alone. Rather, she shows agency in her personal relationship with her partner, as well as in her overall perseverance to achieve 'a better life' as will be seen in a later chapter.

While quite uncommon among the poor with pregnancy experience, several poor without pregnancy experience say they had some form of discussion about the first sexual encounter with their partner—they were asked and they had the chance to give their opinion. This is true for the timing of the first sex, but it is also true for the decision of whether or not to use contraception and which form. As mentioned before, there are also some poor without pregnancy experience who have never had sex, because they have decided not to. Sometimes such refusal is rooted in the general rejection of pre-marital sex. Other times though, the young women simply do not feel ready or haven't found a partner they wish to be intimate with and hence, refuse to engage in sex in the occasion. Among the group of poor, a few cases are reported in which the request for the "proof of love" was as a moment in which the young women conceded to have sex. For one woman though, this served as a breaking point for the relationship because she felt she was being treated in a manipulative way.

The young middle-class women interviewed, both with and without pregnancy experience, are more in control of sexual encounters and contraceptive use if compared to their poor counterparts. Not only do they participate more in the decision on whether to have sex or not, if compared to most of the poor women, they also eventually refer to sex as something that brings them pleasure and joy. Sex as something that satisfies the needs of a woman is not present in the concepts shared by the poor women (except for that one specific case referred to earlier). Moreover, the first sexual relations reported by the middle-class usually happens in a more self-determined way. The middle-class women interviewed describe their first sexual encounters as something they wanted and were ready to experience. Some also share episodes in which previous boyfriends wanted to engage in sex and they did not feel ready themselves. Sometimes such disagreement (and women's consequent behavior) leads to the rupture of these relationships. One middle-class woman without pregnancy experience, for instance, did not feel ready for sex with her boyfriend because she thought she may regret it. They broke up as a consequence. At the same time, two months ago, she had sexual relations with a friend, someone who is not her boyfriend. She felt good, she wanted it, she did it, and is happy about having done it. Her story shows that she was the one who decided, she did not give in to any pressure put on her by a man, and she followed her intuition. Other reports shared by the middle-class interviewees similarly show that they believe that one needs to be 'emotionally prepared.'

*U: Well, I think I've always had the mentality that if you're going to start having sex you have to be mature (note: uses term in female and male form) , but in the sense that you have to know what it means to "fuck" so to speak; If you are going to fuck you know what it means, that means that you can get pregnant so you have to start taking contraceptives, either you are going to take contraceptives or he is going to use condoms, I mean, all*

*the planning and I also think that emotionally you should feel quite secure that this is what you want and that it is the person with whom you are going to do it is the right one and that you feel good with him, it is important to be emotionally mature so that you can face it and not have problems later. (woman, MC/NP)*

Another interesting point she makes is that ‘maturity’ is important—one needs to be ready and able to deal with the preparation, the consequences, and the emotional implications of sex. Also, she clearly states that such maturity is important for both sexes, men and women (‘ser madura o maduro’), which shows implicitly that she does not differentiate between the sexes. Another interesting feature that distinguishes the middle-class from the poor is that among the middle-class that haven’t experienced pregnancies, the use of condoms seems to be much more common compared to their poor counterparts. Generally, the distinction between pregnancy and STDs—and the different ways in preventing each of those—is much clearer among this group if compared to the poor women interviewed and particularly, if compared to those with pregnancy experience.

## 7.2 Gender norms and the way women envision their place in families and in society

Beyond the governing of concrete sexual encounters, gender norms play an even more fundamental role in young women’s lives since they frame the way they can imagine and plan their future. Fixed gender roles and attributes may be embedded in social practices and organize personal relationships. Culture, religion, and even legal frameworks may reproduce those and contribute to the strengthening of a ‘gender system’ (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Learned gender attributes make up gender identity and determine gender roles. Not only may those be different from each other, they may also be valued differently in society and hierarchical associations with these roles may generate a power imbalance. As mentioned earlier, social norms play an important role in the relation between women’s agency and the opportunities available to them. They can facilitate or hinder individuals from taking advantage of available opportunities. Social norms are also strongly associated with female labor force participation as discussed before (Fortin, 2005; Goldin, 2006; Fernández & Fogli, 2006).

Women’s attitudes towards working women are shaped in adolescence, often influenced by parental education and by religious affiliation. Using data from an 18-year panel study, Thornton, Alwin and Camburn (1983) find that mother’s employment, educational attainment, and labor market experience contributes to a child’s egalitarian views. Similarly, growing up in the presence of a working mother influences one’s gender role attitudes (Burt & Scott, 2002). Women’s attitudes towards their future roles in life are shaped also by the way their families assign them tasks. Heilborn and Cabral (2011) in their large-scale study in Brazil found that girls who became mothers in adolescence had been more engaged in domestic work prior to having their baby. The authors explain how involvement in the domestic sphere strengthens girls’ vision that being a mother is a fundamental feature of feminine identity. In this sample, we see that young poor

women (with or without pregnancy experience) dedicate a lot of focus to describing the domestic chores they are taking care of when talking about the way they spend their time daily. Thus, gender roles the individuals are socialized with clearly delineate possible life plans and objectives.

Several of the interviewed poor women see themselves in the future as caring homemakers, who are able to provide a loving environment for her children and family. This implies, on the other hand, that they do not plan to focus on developing economic independence. While technically all adolescents are economically and legally dependent on their families of origin independent of their sex, for boys, the outlook into economic activity implies independence. Poor women, on the other hand, do not imagine themselves independent. Some do mention they had intentions to work at some point, but their partners opposed it. They did not want them to work outside the house. There are a few poor women, who do critically reflect on gender norms and on the impacts of those on the opportunities available to them as young women. Contrary to that, the fact that economic dependence is not deeply questioned emerges in one interview, in which a young woman does not only not have an own income, she refers to her 'back-up option,' her father, when asked about her own income. Thus, should at some point the financial support from her husband fall out, she has made how to survive, one that involves again a third person providing for her. At the same time, the majority, while often uncomfortable with the situation, does not question or express aspirations to change their situation. There are a few exceptions though: Participant J. is a poor woman with pregnancy experience. Her husband supports the family financially and her parents as well, but she wants to change that and has thoroughly reflected why so.

*J: Right now, our goal is to want to buy our house so we can have something of our own and thus bettering ourselves. So, we want to buy our things together. That's why I'm agreeing to work because I need my income as a woman. I need my income, I need to pay for my university or the things of the baby. Because my mother what she has taught us is not always to look for what a man gives you, but that a woman has to overcome herself. (...) And in itself, in my future, I want to choose to buy my house to build my home. Have a savings account for if something happens. Always buy my things, whatever is needed in my house. And so, improving myself. Helping my parents, because they have been a great support for me. And that's how I think about my future. (Laughter) (woman, P/P)*

The association of motherhood and being a homemaker with women's traditional roles and moreover, women's aspirations to fulfill this role well reflects the high value on early family formation (since there are few competing objectives to achieve other than marriage and motherhood)—and it can be a driver behind the formation of early unions. The prevalence of child marriage varies starkly within regions and countries. Child marriage, defined as marriage before age 18,<sup>82</sup> is particularly common in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in parts

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<sup>82</sup> 18 years of age as a threshold for child marriage is used in several conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

of Latin America and the Caribbean (Mathur, Greene, & Malhotra, 2003). Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region of the world where child marriage is not on the decline—no significant change has been observed in the prevalence over the last 30 years (UNICEF, 2014). Moreover, child marriage tends to be particularly high among specific subpopulations. Women who live in rural areas, come from poorer households, and have less schooling are more likely to marry early (IPPF & UNFPA, 2006).

The negative consequences of child marriage have been broadly documented. Early marriage sharply reduces girls' access to education, and anticipation of early marriage often undermines a girl's access to education (Huq & Amin, 2001; Erulkar et al., 2004). For Latin America, De Hoyos et al. (2016) find that early marriage is the most important predictor of being a *nini*<sup>83</sup> among 15- to 18-year-old women. Other factors held equal, being married is associated with a 22.3 percentage point increase in the predicted probability of being a female *nini* and a 21.1 reduction in the probability of studying only, with little effect on the probability of working only. Married *nini* women are probably taking care of children in many cases, reducing their participation in schooling or the labor market. Importantly for this study though, globally, child marriage has been associated with negative impacts on a woman's voice, agency, and decision-making in the household (Wodon et al., 2017; Klugman et al., 2014), and it seems to increase the risk of exposure to intimate partner violence (Clark et al., 2006; Le et al., 2014). At the same time, it is in itself a reflection of the lack of women's agency and decision-making capacity more broadly in societies with high prevalence rates of the phenomenon (Wodon et al., 2017). Globally, economic factors play a role in explaining child marriage. Research shows that in countries where resources and opportunities are scarce, child marriage may be a way out of an economic crisis for the family. Generally, socio-economic factors like poverty and a lack of opportunities (educational and employment related) have been associated with the phenomenon (Wodon et al., 2017). Based on DHS data, the authors show that child marriage and early childbearing both are more likely among the poorer groups.<sup>84</sup>

Cultural factors, including social norms, seem to be important drivers of child marriage. Murithi (2016) show, based on qualitative data, that in a context where premarital sex is taboo, child marriage may be a response of adolescents to their desire to engage in sexual relations. Social norms regarding gender-appropriate behavior, and especially those related to masculinity and femininity, also play a key role in promoting child marriage. In most societies where child marriage is common, the social standing of women is defined largely in terms of marriage and childbearing. At the same time, child marriage reinforces these social and gender norms, as married girls often

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<sup>83</sup> From the Spanish: 'ni estudian, ni trabajan,' this terms is commonly used for young people out of school and out of work.

<sup>84</sup> Higher prevalence among the poor combined with the fact that the poor are likely to be more vulnerable to the consequences of child marriage suggests that benefits from ending child marriage would benefit the poor disproportionately (Wodon et al., 2017).

take subservient roles to an (older) husband, ensuring their limited social status and lack of independence (IPPF & UNFPA, 2006; Levine et al., 2008). Once a girl is married, she is under the “protection” of her husband and is consequently viewed as under his control (UNICEF, 2001; Levine et al., 2008).

Early unions (before age 18) are very common for the poor young women interviewed for this study, particularly for those with pregnancy experiences.<sup>85</sup> In Nicaragua, the ‘unión de hecho’ (de facto union) is a legal status in which several of the informants live and is legally protected in the Ley de Alimentos (N 143, de 1992). Basically equivalent to a formal marriage, it is often the preferred option by the poor because of its low cost. The Nicaraguan Constitution in Article 72 of Chapter IV refers to “union” this way: “Marriage and the stable de facto union are protected by the State; they rest on the voluntary agreement of the man and the woman and can be dissolved by mutual consent or by the will of one of the parties.”<sup>86</sup>

Relationships among the poor interviewees sometimes start early, as early as 13 in many cases or even before (one entered a union at the age of 9, another one at 11). They tend to move in with their partner quickly after they start the relationship. That pressure to live with the boy they are having a relationship with is often a direct consequence of the taboo on premarital sex, according to the interviews and as mentioned before. One woman explains how she moved in with her partner after having had sex since she felt she now did not belong anymore to her family of origin. Another participant (poor with pregnancy experience) similarly expresses how the idea of premarital sex led her to move in with the partner:

*G: Ahh, this, is that he told me then, this, look, do you want to have sex with me? And I said no. Of course, I did not, I told him as long as you do not take me with you, I will not have intercourse with you.*

*Interviewer: Before you left with him?*

*G: Yes, before. (...) No! If you want to do me the harm, take me! (Laughter) I tell him, because no, it's not like that. Of course, there are girls who think differently. Yes, I don't care, they say: my mom is going to maintain me, I already got myself into trouble the first time and my mom does not even notice and that was not the case, I told him that if he wanted to have any relationship with me that he would have to take me first and so it was. (woman, P/P)*

The taboo on premarital sex is not only a driver of early marriages, it also leads to quite short periods of dating compared to Western middle-class standards. Couples do not have much time to ‘date’ since sexual relationships are not something to be pursued while still living with the parents, according to the common norms and values. Signs of a young woman’s potentially intimate involvement with a man are treated with a lot of suspicion in the communities. Early

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<sup>85</sup> At the time of the interviews, 21 out of 31 poor women with pregnancy experience and 10 out of 19 poor women without pregnancy experience lived in a union.

<sup>86</sup> In the Spanish original: “El matrimonio y la unión de hecho estable están protegidos por el Estado; descansan en el acuerdo voluntario del hombre y la mujer y podrán disolverse por mutuo consentimiento o por la voluntad de una de las partes.”

marriage is strongly correlated with early childbearing (Klugman et al., 2014). Girls living in poor households are almost twice as likely to marry before the age of 18 as girls in higher-income households (Klugman et al., 2014 estimates based on Demographic and Health Survey data for 54 countries using latest data available from 2001 – 2012). Similarly, Wodon et al. (2017) show that controlling for other factors affecting total fertility and based on a sample of 15 countries, a girl marrying at 17 will have on average 17 percent more children compared to those married at the age of 18 or older. Interestingly though, the pregnancy being followed by a marriage for reputational purposes is not the most common chronological order in the data collected for this study. Rather, the girls get pregnant within the year from moving in with their partner. Moving in is followed immediately by sexual engagement and then, the pregnancy happens. Relatedly, Guttmacher Institute (2010) states that motherhood before a union is not very common in Nicaragua: 2001 data shows that only 2 percent of women age 20 to 24 had experienced pregnancy before entering a union in adolescence<sup>87</sup>. There was very little variation in terms of place of residence or educational level.<sup>88</sup>

Child marriage is commonly associated with unions built without the consent of the girl. These child marriages are more common in societies and cultures where girls are unable to give the “free and full” consent to marriage recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, because the decision on marriage is usually made by others in their household. Interestingly though, this is not the case in Latin America commonly, where usually girls decide to enter a union and where arranged or forced marriages are not usual. However, these decisions are most often made in an environment marked by constraints. A recent publication on child marriage in Brazil (Taylor et al., 2015) discusses child marriage in that country as an expression of poor women’s agency, because these women choose to go off with a partner without consulting with their parents or anyone else most of the time. While the descriptions of the reasoning and decision-making of young women in that qualitative study resemble very much my own findings, another parallel is to be found in the fact that these choices are made under constraints in both cases. Hence, referring to these choices as an expression of agency seems inadequate given Sen’s emphasis placed on the ‘reason to value’ dimension to agency, as discussed earlier. It even may seem doubtful to speak of ‘decisions’ made by young women since the woman’s choice of entering this union is often strongly influenced by her economic needs and the social expectations placed on her (McCleary-Sills et al., 2013). One key informant put it: “Choosing is not deciding”<sup>89</sup>. This remarkable statement reflects awareness of the limited set of opportunities available to poor girls and low levels of self-esteem and empowerment. A new ‘provider’ is seen as the only way out and entering a relationship can be a form of survival for women, or for the

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<sup>87</sup> Though a disclaimer is necessary here, acknowledging noting that this data is relatively old.

<sup>88</sup> At the same time, it has to be noted that the unions which the young women in this study had entered before getting pregnant often did not last through pregnancy/the child’s first years of life.

<sup>89</sup> In the original citation: “*Elegir no es decidir*”.

children they already have. One of the participants quite clearly makes this point when she says: “I felt, how can I say, anguished, and I said, maybe having a partner it would not be the same”<sup>90</sup>.

Some of these unions are products of strategic decision-making by the girls. Often, the poverty in which these young women live is exacerbated by physical and emotional abuse or hardship and by dependence from their family of origin. The women choose to move from one form of dependence to another. Forming a new family and home seems the only exit option to them. In these cases, sex can be used as a resource in an ‘emancipation’ strategy. While clearly that terminology (given its connotation particularly among feminists) may appear somewhat misplaced here, women do use sex as a way to ‘being freed/liberated’ from their homes and families of origin. Some girls make conscious choices to join a partner out of a wish to escape difficult or abusive family conditions.<sup>91</sup> Given their precarious economic conditions, their lack of support networks and their lack of experience in making an own income, these young women may have no other way out of their homes. In contrast, women from better off socio-economic groups have access to quality education and opportunities and thus, can transition to adulthood by filling new roles and by finding their ways to economic independence. In these cases, sex (and their bodies) provide them with the ‘exit’ option out of the house of their families of origin. They may engage in transactional sex for lack of good alternate livelihoods (Hope, 2007). While early marriage is not necessarily a direct indicator of gender-based violence, ENDESA (2006) does show that prevalence rates for physical and sexual violence gradually decrease with an increase in age at first union. Relatedly, the WHO multi-country study on violence against women also found that younger women with lower levels of schooling faced a higher risk of intimate partner violence (physical or sexual) in almost all the countries studied (García-Moreno et al., 2005).

While girls who strategically use sex as a resource do have “control” to some extent over their sexuality, this behavior is concerning in three ways. First, by using that resource, they enter a relationship in which they are unlikely to further exercise control over the usage of that resource. Second, by using sex as a resource they are unlikely to experience the pleasure of sexuality, which is of value in and of itself. With the exception of only one informant, sex was seen as something they have to give. Often, they used the term “surrender”<sup>92</sup> to describe their sexual relations. Third, this choice made by poor girls is likely made due to constraints. They would probably not use sex as a resource if they had access to other assets that would allow them to achieve their goals. This hypothesis is partially confirmed by the fact that middle-class participants, with their much better access to education and economic opportunities, refer to different emancipation strategies. In the absence of alternatives to living with their family of origin, very many poor women are forced to live with a man that offers them a living. These (often) early unions are

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<sup>90</sup> In the original citation: “*Me sentía, cómo le puedo decir, angustiada, y yo decía, tal vez al tener una pareja no es igual*”.

<sup>91</sup> Quantitative data shows that child abuse is not limited to poor families, but in my study these situations were mentioned only by poor girls in the sample.

<sup>92</sup> In the original citation: “*entregarse*”.



imbalanced in terms of power dynamics from the start. Women are opting for new forms of dependence; indeed, marriage may deepen their dependence.

*M: But when he took me to his house, he did not take me as his partner (the interviewee cries), he took me as an employee.*

*Interviewer: Who did he live with?*

*M: With the mom and his children.*

*Interviewer: Did you have to do things in the house?*

*M: Yes. I felt that I had no other way out, because to my grandmother, I did not want to return there, because of my uncles. My dad did not want to take care of me because he had nowhere to live. And to 'Sauce' I did not want to go either because I knew that it would be worse for me there. And I was afraid that something would happen to the girl. I did not know anyone, I had never gone. (woman, P/P)*

Economic hardship and the lack of income opportunities is among the dominant motives that drive young women into early marriages. The following interviewee clearly states she entered the relationship because of economic needs.

*Interviewer: Did you fall in love or was it a moment of passion?*

*Y: No, I practically consider this a moment of weakness in the economy, he offered me some money and then I said: "well, anyways, I will not waste it", and I fell for him ...(woman, P/P)*

Another driver of child marriage is abuse in their family of origin. Many of these young women leave their homes of origin because of different forms of abuse (sexual, physical, and economic). In those cases, moving in with their partner is the only option they see available to them to change their situation or to survive. Other cases are reported in very similar ways. The following example shows how one of the young women had just hoped for 'a place to stay' to escape her abusive family context. She shares how after moving in with a 'friend,' she learned that she had no choice other than acting as his wife, which implied not only doing the housework, but also sexual favors.

*K: (...) He told me that he felt sorry for what I was living and he told me that he was going to give me a place to live and that's how two weeks went by. But -nobody will believe that we have not had anything-, he says to me, -it is better that you stay with me since we already live together and so nobody tells you anything in your house- then -if not, your mom will come to get you and it will be worse- then I went to get the injection. (woman, P/P)*

In summary, child marriage seems to be one of the key drivers of teenage childbearing in Nicaragua. Gender norms place a strong emphasis on women's role in society as mothers and caregivers. These norms, in combination with the tabooization of premarital sex and the lack of outside options in situations of economic hardship or abusive family contexts, lead several young poor women to opt for an early marriage.

### 7.3 Gender norms and complementary roles in relationships: caring mothers, absent fathers

The descriptions of the relationships among the poor interviewees largely portray complementary roles for the sexes. Gender norms define limits and barriers for exercising agency for the young women. Relationship dynamics are marked by strict sexual divisions of labor and responsibilities. In the reports from the young women, one concludes that the assignment of different roles and tasks according to gender already starts at early ages. Time use before childbearing already differs when comparing young women with men, and young poor women who reach adolescence tend to take on more domestic and care work within the family. This seems to be a common and normalized pattern, which strikes none of the poor participants as unusual. The young women become more and more confined to the private sphere, which prepares them for the role that is socially expected from them, to become mothers and domestic (and unpaid) workers. Their physical isolation can reduce their ability to build networks and take on opportunities outside the home, as is clearly the case with most of the young poor women interviewed. They make very few references to acquaintances, friends, or even neighbors they may regularly talk to. These observed behaviors seem to be motivated by two things: on the one hand, it serves to ‘protect’ the girl’s reputation, and on the other, it enables others to profit from her unpaid work within the home. It is common that young women are assigned the care of younger siblings and other domestic tasks. Especially when mothers work outside the house or are absent for other reasons, daughters are often expected to replace them at home. The assignment of unpaid work to the women is replicated later on in life when they live with a partner. The intra-household division of labor is very clearly gendered: “Men do nothing—they just work and rest”<sup>93</sup> as one of the informants states.

It is important to emphasize that middle-class participants refer less to having domestic duties during adolescence. Most of them do not refer to such tasks at all. On the other hand, most of them refer to household employees taking care of domestic work in their homes of origin.<sup>94</sup> Gender norms guide the way how labor is divided and how the daily routines of couples are organized. The ideals of motherhood limit women’s sphere to the household and assign economic activity (often exclusively) to men, which may increase women’s economic dependence. Several interviewees expressed their dependence on their partners and the way they are subject to economic “manipulation,” as one called it. In most poor couples interviewed for this study, men are economically active and the main income earners, while the young women are homemakers, sometimes with no income of their own or irregular ones. While women stress domestic tasks, men’s descriptions of their daily routines focus on paid work and importantly, on free-time activities on the weekends, which is rarely mentioned among the poor mothers at

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<sup>93</sup> In the original citation: “*varones no hacen nada – solo trabajan y descansan*”.

<sup>94</sup> Interestingly, in one of the first attempts to construct a recruitment filter for the middle-class, a local key informant was asked how to do that, and she responded that ‘having domestic workers’ is a traditional sign of belonging to the Nicaraguan middle-class.

all. The young women interviewed reflect that expectations of their partners is for them to be good housewives, a projection they are trying to fulfill. The fact that the roles are not only different and complementary, but also hierarchical in terms of power dynamics is normalized by many informants, as the following example shows:

*Interviewer: And your partner: what does he like the most about you and what does he like the least?*

*D: He says I'm a good woman, because I take care of his clothes, every day I have hot food at the right time, I have his clothes ironed. So, I am attentive with him. The way he tells me to do things, I'll do them. One has to be attentive to the husband, so that's what he likes about me. But sometimes he does not like it because he says that sometimes, maybe, he says - pick up that hair, the feet, look how dirty you are walking around -. -Go and make yourself look nice-. (woman, P/P)*

The description of this interviewee is illustrative of her subordinate role in the couple. Several other (poor) interviewees explain that their housewife qualities are what their partners most appreciate in them. The poor young women tend to internalize these expectations, and some say they take pride in being a housewife. It fulfills them and gives them a sense of purpose. Several statements speak to this, and oftentimes, young women differentiate themselves from other young women who in their views are not performing as well as wives and mothers. Especially the poor with pregnancy experience build self-esteem out of being a 'good' mother. References are made to sacrifice and 'serving' someone else (their partner or their children) as underlying qualities that make good wives and mothers.

*Interviewer: What is 'being a mom' for you?*

*A: It is giving everything. (woman, P/P)*

Motherhood gives them a purpose and a task to fulfill, and a difficult one moreover. There are many things one has to take into consideration to perform that 'job' well. Hence, feeling one accomplishes the related task makes them feel pride. Overall, the notion that motherhood means responsibility is very strong. Moreover, motherhood involves more responsibilities if compared to fatherhood.

*Interviewer: And being a dad? The responsibility of being a dad, how do you understand that?*

*J: Well, for the father I do not think they are as indispensable as we are because the dad comes ... he almost does not relate to them. Because he works, he comes ... (woman, P/P)*

Some of the young poor women interviewed are to a certain extent accepting of gender norms and roles and the implicit division of labor. Some explain how they pass them on to their own children, involving their daughters at very early stages into the different chores related to care and domestic work.

Such statements and expressed attitudes are to a large extent overlapping with the statements of the poor without pregnancy experience or without children. They emphasize the importance of

domestic tasks and work in their own lives quite strongly and they also share associations with motherhood similar to the poor with children. These associations are generally very positively connoted, and also reflective of the importance of sacrifice as a core quality of a good mother. As for women, gender norms similarly prescribe appropriate behaviors and attributes for men. While concepts of masculinity may vary between different social and cultural contexts, some characteristics tend to cut across most cultures. Often ideals about men and masculinities prescribe ideas according to which men should be strong, tough, open to risks, not emotional but rational. Such norms of masculinity profoundly influence men's and boys' relationships with women, children, and other men—and themselves. Globally, a very common characteristic associated with masculinity is the ability to provide (economically) for one's family. In our sample, a father's responsibility is often associated mainly and merely with being the economic provider.

Overall, the expectations towards male partners are relatively low among the women interviewed. Women define men's qualities often as the absence of bad behaviors. The absence of bad behaviors, such as violence and drug or alcohol abuse, which they seem to be commonly aware of in other couples, is a reason for them to be appreciative of their partners. Conversely, when probed about positive behaviors they observe in their partners, very few have to report any concrete examples. If they do so, they most often cite positively the way in which their partners treat their children.

While less prevalent than the mentioning of drug and alcohol abuse, there are also some references to involvement in criminal activities among partners. One rather extreme case is referred to by a young poor woman without pregnancy experience in adolescence who now has a child of a prisoner: She met him when she was 19 years old and visiting her brother there. At first she did not like him much, but then he treated her very nicely. She currently has another boyfriend, who is in the same prison, but she doesn't visit him, and they just speak over the phone. She is afraid of her ex-boyfriend, who she believes is dangerous.

Care and domestic work are closely associated with women. Even in cases where women do work outside the home, men do not take on more housework and unpaid care. In the unions among the poor, men usually do not participate much in child rearing. Many of the fathers are physically absent since the parents separated. Some of those fathers provide financial assistance, but do not visit or establish a relationship with their child. Expectations regarding fathers' involvement in care work are very low among many of the poor interviewees. A common statement is that men do not have as much responsibility as women, since fathers “barely even look at a child”<sup>95</sup>, as one interviewee puts it. Fathers are not that indispensable, another one states, while mothers are more connected with and thus, more important for the child. Others justify the lack of the fathers' involvement in their children's lives with the fact that men tend to work outside the house, and therefore do not have enough exposure to the child to know what it means to take care of her/him. There is a strong sense among interviewees that men often do not take the

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<sup>95</sup> In the original citation: “*casi no los miran*”.

responsibility for their children on as they should. Even if the father is present, mothers tend to not elaborate on the relationship between the father and the child. Fathers are significantly less emotionally involved in the lives of their children, it seems. Also, the stories show that motherhood changes the lives of women profoundly, impacting their routines, time use, and priorities, while fatherhood does not necessarily do the same for fathers. Men tend to continue many of their pre-fatherhood routines and behaviors.

Along those lines, some participants do reflect critically though on the role of the father and the common understanding that he will not be involved in caring for the child. Seeing them merely as economic providers is a limited perspective, according to some interviewees.

*Y: ... then I think that fathers do have a greater responsibility, not only economically, not only in clothes, but also in giving love and teaching their children to be good children, to be good citizens, with good moral, ethical, spiritual principles... Sometimes children are losing good manners, respect, education towards the elderly, even with their parents, then I think it is a great responsibility to instill good values to their children, if they want to be good parents, if they want them to be better than them, and good citizens, who contribute to the development of Nicaragua. (woman, P/NP)*

Similar to women, fathers interviewed for this study internalized gender stereotypes. For instance, the image of the ‘good mother’ is being replicated by the interviewed fathers as well. Also, most of them see women ‘naturally’ as the primary care giver and the most important connection for a child.

*Interviewer: And what is it for you to be a mother?*

*A: I say that the word means a lot: mother, and it is derived from many things, because mother is not the same as father, because I am going to say something to you: tomorrow, we will take a turn, period. The mother does not, the mother is the one who stays with the children in the good, in the bad, in hunger, in the drought and in everything, then ... she is that person that at the time that you have a problem, there she is giving you a little cushion so that you hit yourself less and so that you don't hit yourself – bang! so that this little cushion will serve as a shock absorber that you will give to yourself. So, I think that ... the father not, the father will be: you fucked up! Now, what do you want ...? The mother not, she comes and throws you the little cushion so that my son falls softly and that it doesn't happen to hard and so that he doesn't get angry, so that's what I say: from father to mother there is a pretty big meaning, it is quite huge this meaning of being a mother. (father)*

The definition of a good mother across the groups is associated with sacrifice and being prepared to put others (children and other family members) first—always. The notion of giving, sacrifice, and responsibility is reflected in several statements. Men also emphasize the respect that women deserve in fulfilling their roles as mothers. Motherhood is associated with altruism and with “more than being just a woman” as one participant puts it. With regard to how gender norms are being implemented in their own families, the men in this study varied between expressing rather liberal views to slightly (but cautiously framed) conservative positions. This, again, may be due to the selection bias described before. At the same time, a study about masculinity in the Central

American countries found that Nicaraguan men tended to be more open than men of other Central American countries in their gender attitudes, with the exception of Costa Rica (where men were even more open) (Ortega Hegg, 2004). The author hypothesizes that this dates back to the revolution: Women took very active part in the revolution, challenged traditional gender arrangements, and incentivized open reflections about their roles in society, which had an effect on how men see gender roles as well.

Despite the workshops and sensitization that the men interviewed for this study may have been exposed to<sup>96</sup>, none of them emphasized providing emotional support to their children and instead, stressed the role of economic provider. Lack of responsibility as well as abandonment figure prominently when the young men talk about their own fathers. The abandonment was not necessarily just physical, but also emotional. According to the informants, these behavior patterns are still broadly accepted in Nicaraguan society.

The expectations of fathers seem different among the middle-class. Several interviewees from this group raise strong criticism against the socially common sexual division of labor, which foresees the assignment of emotional care to women and economic provision to men.

*Interviewer: What responsibilities does a father have?*

*V: I think that the responsibility is the same, because there are people who say that the mother should be the affectionate one and that the dad should give the money, I think we both have a responsibility and I think that the man should be extremely capable of being able to change the son's diaper and to dress the daughter's doll, not that the girl has to play with a doll, sure, but according to the stereotypes. I think that the man plays the same role as the woman, and the mother has the same as the father. So, to not see the dad as the one who is going to take me to the party and the mom as the one who scolds me, but both. (woman, MC/NP)*

However, another participant reflects how dedication, sacrifice, and attention come more natural to women. Men can be educated to be dedicated fathers, but they need to be reminded and would not intuitively put the child first, which is the predisposition of most women she personally knows. Therefore, she suggests that the sexual division of labor equally persists within the middle-class. One difference seems to be the level of critical reflection of these behavior patterns among the young women and the fact that those (the middle-class women) tend to disagree with that 'order of things' and make an explicit effort to change these conditions in their daily lives, while the overwhelming majority among the poor seemed to naturalize these conditions more. The clear-cut complementarity of gender roles is more recurrent among the poor. Among the middle-class, care is still predominantly female, but economic activity involves both men and women. For some, their work is more important, or equally important, as having a partner. Hence, they prioritize it, despite the fact that it may be one of the reasons due to which they have difficulties finding a partner. That alone shows how the self-image the middle-class women carry is quite

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<sup>96</sup> As discussed in the methodological annex, unfortunately it was not possible retroactively to track back the precise extent to which male research participants had been exposed to the activities offered by the NGO through which they were recruited for this study.

different from the one of the poor. They see themselves as (principally) economic agents, independent and in control. Marriage and motherhood can be part of that self-image, but they are not necessarily the main features of it.

In comparison to the poor, the relationships described by both middle-class groups seem more equal—the power dynamics seem to be very different and more balanced. They describe motives like independence, respect, and freedom, and they refer to spending active time together. They share hobbies in common with their partners (similarly an indicator of more equal relationships). They refer to interactions around politics, discussions, exchange, and similar interests. Furthermore, they do not refer to power imbalances explicitly. One participant (middle-class with pregnancy experience) describes how she enjoys that her partner is not always around (he is a pilot) and that she can do whatever she likes and be independent while at the same time being in a relationship. Overall, her relationship is marked by freedom, mutual respect, and independence of both individuals it seems. The concept of ‘testing’ to live together, of dating and exploring whether the relationship works out is very present in the reports of the middle-class. As mentioned before, this is something that is completely absent among the poor, linked to the strong emphasis placed on sex belonging into marriage among that group. For instance, one interviewee, who has been with her partner since three years, would like to accompany her partner to study abroad. However, she emphasizes that different challenges await a relationship when suddenly living in the same household together and that they would have to test whether or not they function equally well when moving in together.

These differences along socio-economic lines are not completely unexpected. Globally, women with higher levels of education tend to have more independent and emancipated values and to agree less with traditional role models, including the centering of life around mothering. Furthermore, higher levels of education usually mean an increase in life goal opportunities from which to choose. The decision to have a child thus turns into one amongst other options (Chioda, 2016; Klein, 1989; Rindfuss et al., 1996). In my sample, the middle-class shares a less idealized and glorious vision of motherhood. As the following interviewee (who had a child at the age of 24) explains, motherhood is a lot of work and it comes at a price. Imbalances and clear-cut assignment of roles within the couple can become a risk to the relationship, which is why she also wants to go back to work and be economically active. She points to the fact that many women suffer internal conflicts when they want to be good mothers and be successful in their careers.

*Y: ... maybe I will not have the opportunity to be a full time mom and I do not know if I want to be a full time mom 24 hours a day, I would also like to have something for me, especially in the economic aspect that gives you independence because what I have seen around me, my sister, my father and my mother: if the mother has no income, if the mother is full time, the father is the one who generates the income, the man gets some "shit" in the head that he thinks he's superior, he thinks of himself as 'I provide', I decide, I do not know, this changes a switch in their heads like I'm the one who gives the money and you do not do anything, you spend the time here in the house. The work of the woman gets devalued, I'm terrified of that. I would love to stimulate my son, but I*

*also know that it is not for a long time and that I need a development as a woman, not to be stuck, if not, then later, that is what I have seen in my parents and my sister, then later if a woman is fully in the house, there is an aspect of her that does not grow, so when the man is growing she does not, then there is an unevenness that does not go hand in hand, there is low self-esteem, there are manipulations, I would not like to take that route. Looking a bit for the balance, it's complicated (laughs). (woman, MC/NP).*

Like this interviewee, other participants reflect on the stress and inner conflicts emerging from aiming to fulfill multiple roles—economic activity, self-fulfillment and being a good mother. Several middle-class participants were either afraid of or currently experiencing tensions between motherhood and economic activity. They seemed to fear being overburdened, but also being economically dependent on a partner. Similarly, Fortin (2005) in her analysis of World Value Survey data from 25 OECD countries shows that the division between family values and egalitarian views leads to an inner conflict among many Western women, the so-called ‘mother’s guilt’ (Buttrose & Adams, 2005), one of the significant obstacles to greater gender equality in the labor market, according to the author. Middle-class participants more openly expressed concerns about these competing identities and their translation into day-to-day life. They also reflected more critically on society’s different standards for women and men and were seemingly very aware of prevalent ‘machismo’ in the Nicaraguan society and its burdensome impacts on everyone. Across interviews, middle-class women interviewed for this study share very critical reflections on gender norms prevalent in the Nicaraguan society and how those trigger the differences in possibilities and opportunities available to men and women in the country<sup>97</sup> and lead to separate roles.

Another middle-class interviewee shares the following thought, which is much in line with a previous comment on overburdening modern women with the expectations to fulfill multiple roles.

*G: (...) The society of today is still very machista and so the woman has to fulfill a role of super hero, because right now ... Before, at the time of my grandmother, one was only a housewife, a wife and a mother, before they did not work. Now we have to be wives, be mothers, have a career and work, so society is ... If you stop doing all those roles, I mean, you have to comply with all of that to be excellent, because if you dedicate yourself to be a housewife, then they will say you are a kept woman. If a woman only works in her profession, then she is selfish and neglects the home, they will cheat on you, because she does not take care of the husband and the children are going to be a disaster. I think that's what they criticize the most, that the woman has to comply with everything and has to be a super hero. (woman, MC/NP)*

Hence, middle-class perspectives on the complementary assignments of gender roles is much more critical if compared to the poor’s perspectives on that complementarity.

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<sup>97</sup> As mentioned earlier, this strong division of attitudes may be related to the fact that women for the middle-class sample were recruited from a rather progressive background.



## 7.4 From complementary to hierarchical: Women's vulnerability, economic dependence, and violence against women

Among the poor women with pregnancy experience, half (16) fully depend economically on someone (15 on their partner and one on her mother). The remainder has access to some form of own income, including regular jobs (such as those at the NGO or the Zona Franca) or through irregular jobs (such as taking care of children in the extended family or neighborhood, cooking, or doing laundry for others). The main income of the households these young women reside in is provided by their partners (mostly construction workers, mechanics, workers at the Zona Franca, etc.), but the households tend to pool resources from several members (with regular and irregular incomes).<sup>98</sup> Those who do not have an income of their own do not necessarily question this or express interest in changing it. At the same time, it is quite obvious that the economic dependence they are exposed to drives their decision-making regularly and substantially. They often have no other options other than leaving with a man if the environment at home becomes too tense (or abusive in some cases).

Sometimes, economic dependence leads to an overall dependence and so, some poor women are also not in the position to decide for themselves and their future. They depend on their parents or family of origin first and then, on their partners to make decisions for them. Poor women often feel they should consult with their parents before getting married or starting a union. This is not true for the young men on the other hand. None of the male informants reported having had to consult with anyone before they entered their union. An extreme form of dependence is evident in those cases when men 'negotiate' a woman's fate with her parents or family of origin without her participating actively in these negotiations. In those cases, women seem to be objects of trade rather than subjects. The following interviewee states how her aunt, with whom she was living at the moment, negotiated with her future husband:

*G: 'She is your responsibility', but that she did tell him, 'if you take her from me, if someday you will leave her, you will bring her back to me as I am giving her to you'. (Laughter) That is how my aunt told him, how she told him. (woman, P/P).*

Relatedly, another poor woman reports how her mother and her partner decided how to deal with the pregnancy without her—the mother of the baby—actively participating in the decision-making process other than as a passive listener. Other informants claim they can take most of

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<sup>98</sup> The sample of poor women with pregnancy experience consisted of 13 young women who mentioned 'being a housewife' as their main and only occupation and additionally a small number of young women who said they are housewives and study. At the same time, the share of housewives is significantly higher than it appears if one only considers the Ciudad Sandino sample (8 out of 14 are housewives). Almost all young women recruited through the NGO worked, a process which had been supported by the NGO since achieving financial independence for young women in crisis is one of their objectives.

the decisions themselves, but when it comes to important ones, other family members, such as partners, parents, or grandparents are the ones who end up deciding.

The middle-class women with a pregnancy experience also mention that they depended a lot on their parents' support. Their parents enabled them to live independent lives after the pregnancy occurred in all of those cases. While the middle-class women *de facto* are also dependent on their parents, they describe this dependence more as a form of support. One case, in which both her and his parents make a strong effort to enable the young couple to live an independent life is the case of participant H. The parents and in-laws take care of the child care support, they pay for someone to help with cleaning, they pay the rent or offer an apartment, and they even finance the studies abroad. The middle-class women without children report the same as their peers with children: they are 'supported' by their parents, according to the language they use. For instance, one woman shares that she accepts her father's financial support, which he provides so she can stay home and take care of the baby in his first year of life. At the same time, it is clear that while the support is helpful, they would survive in the absence of it as well. Hence, the middle-class receives support, but they would have options if they were not provided with it—circumstances that are quite different from being in situations where one's survival (and one's child's survival) is closely tied to support provided by someone else. The latter situation is equivalent to dependency. Since those women who currently live in unions entered those usually at a very young age, they often haven't finished their education, which limits their income-generating capacity. Furthermore though, they mostly do not imagine themselves as economically independent.

In multiple reports, the interconnectedness between economic dependence and how that affects the bargaining within the couple, including the capacity of the dependent woman to leave or impose her preferences and suggestions, becomes very apparent.<sup>99</sup> Also, once they realize that there is a threat that their partners, who they depend on, may leave them, they panic as they realize the degree of dependence they are in and that they would not be able to secure their living on their own. One interviewee expresses her feeling of helplessness as her partner is involved with another woman. This is a threat to her stability since she does not have any other support besides him. In many cases, the dependence is stipulated by the young women leaving their families of origin to live with the partner (in the partner's place). Not only does this mean they find themselves suddenly physically in his space, but it also means that they have given up on the (emotional and physical) support system available to them in their own families of origin. Different from the dependence from family of origin, if depending economically from a partner, sex becomes a means of trade. When reflecting about women's situation more generally, one informant emphasizes the point of economic dependence and the related right over one's destiny (and body) by quoting a Nicaraguan proverb:

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<sup>99</sup> Additionally, other dimensions of inequality between the partners such as differences of age, for instance, may add to the unequal distribution of power within the couple (Mensch & Lloyd, 1998; Schoepf, 1994; Youri, 1994).

K: *'... there is a deeply held conception that says -the one that sustains you, is the one that decides over you- or - the one that sustains your beak is the one that gets to decide over your monkey- the monkey is the vulva. (...)'(woman, P/P).*

This proverb sheds clear light on the specific context and how economic dependence and men's control over women's sexuality are mutually reinforcing principles. Women growing up learning that they have to obey and provide sexual favors to whoever provides for them must have an impact on how they perceive their capacity to take control over their sexuality, body, life themselves. Especially in those cases where women left their families of origin to live with the partner, they may eventually find themselves in a situation where they have to put up with sex against their will. The connection between economic dependence and losing control over their bodies is a very present and strong one in the data and an experience shared in multiple accounts. Furthermore, the young women have no exit options from those relationship, including from abusive ones. Unable to provide for themselves and their children, they have no way out other than their families of origin, which in some cases were the main motivation why they ended up in the early marriage to begin with.

The poor without a pregnancy experience describe similar dependence when in a union. At the same time, there is a significant difference when comparing their reports with the ones from poor with pregnancy experience. As long as they do not have a child to raise and be responsible for and as long as they have not been expelled from their family of origin (which is often associated to a premarital pregnancy), they are significantly less vulnerable compared to poor with a child. In that sense, having a child deepens the vulnerability of young poor women in quite a few ways. Having a child in common makes it more difficult to liberate themselves from the dependence because they now need to ensure that someone provides not only for themselves, but also for the child.

Many of the young poor women living in a union who participated in the study expressed being unhappy in their relationships. Some of these women were aware the partners were maintaining affairs in parallel, while others felt they were not treated with respect and kindness. However, they have no exit options. They cannot escape their relationships, and they depend on their partners, particularly in an economic sense. On a more extreme spectrum, women who are exposed to domestic violence also face severe difficulties in escaping these relationships, because they are profoundly dependent. Several interviewees describe their failed attempts to separate from their partners, as they had nowhere to go and no way of surviving. One of the interviewees lived with her abusive partner for nine years. She says she had sex with him to keep him quiet.

*Interviewer: Was there affection?*

D: *Yes. But in the last years, I haven't, not, the last years, more than anything ... More than anything, it was like a company. I no longer felt it was because of having sex. 'Ah, my love, this and that'. Not like that. I no longer felt that thing so at the time of having, sometimes when we had sex it just was to make sure he would not say: 'see, you have another man'. But ...*

*Interviewer: But for, for ...*

*D: To keep his mouth shut. But it was not because I wanted to. (woman, P/P)*

As mentioned before, several women do end up with their partners out of necessity and their need for survival. Economic dependence has strong and evident implications on decision-making capacity. It limits a woman's potential to voice her interests and needs, and it constrains her opportunity to actively change her condition.

The middle-class women (both with and without pregnancy experience) show significantly less dependence from their partners. They are economically more independent—they have (good) jobs, they are currently completing or have already completed their tertiary education. In addition, they live in a context where they are exposed to economically active women. Hence, they can imagine themselves being independent, and they can count on the support of their family of origin to achieve their goals. In the middle-class interviews, it also becomes clear that a pregnancy does not put them in a situation with a lack of options, as is the case of their poor peers. They still have choices and options available to them. For instance, some mention that the father of the baby wanted to use the pregnancy to tie her emotionally (and effectively) to him. However, that did not work out in those cases.

While women's constraints or lack of agency is evident in the above paragraphs and examples, the most extreme cases of lack of agency (or: erosion of it) are those in which the young women suffer from emotional, physical, and sexual violence from their partners. The latest prevalence data for intimate partner violence available for Nicaragua is from 2006. It shows that the prevalence of intimate partner violence is correlated with the age at first marriage: almost 4 out of 10 women married by the age of 15 reported physical or sexual violence by a partner. This share drops consistently to reach 14 percent among the ones married at age 25 or older (see Table 6).

Table 6: Nicaragua prevalence data: Percentage of women who reported physical or sexual violence by a partner ever, by age at first marriage or union (Source: ENDESA 2006)

< 15	15-19	20-24	25+
39	29	24	14

This is consistent with other research which finds adolescent childbearing to be associated with intimate partner violence and past incidents of sexual abuse in Latin America (Pallitto & Murillo, 2008).

Several women in the sample have been exposed to different forms of violence<sup>100</sup>: They suffered physical and/or sexual abuse in their homes of origin, and the perpetrators include neighbors, step-fathers, step-grandfathers, other relatives, acquaintances, and to a lesser extent, female

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<sup>100</sup> See methodological annex on the ethical research precautions taken with regards to these cases.

family members (mothers and grandmothers). In addition, even when victims told family members - mostly mothers - about having experienced violence they would not receive support. The fact that those who learn about the abuse have the potential to intervene and still choose not to do so is particularly hurtful for the young women. Poor women interviewed also express that violent men are very common and that intimate partner violence is a prevalent phenomenon in their communities. Several of the interviewees who were at some point directly exposed to violence state that they felt only ready to leave their relationship once the violence escalated.

In our data, most of the poor young women with pregnancy experience and some of those without pregnancy experience refer to controlling behaviors by their male partners. Partners are jealous, and they control women's mobility, dictating how the woman should behave, what she should do, and how she should do it. The interviewees also refer to partners controlling and judging the way they handle the household (checking whether or not the house is clean enough) and forbidding them to go out to meet friends or family. In addition, physical, sexual, and economic abuse by partners are mentioned by the interviewees. The story of one of the young women (poor with pregnancy experience) exemplifies how the severe forms of dependence make them particularly vulnerable. Participant H. suffered of emotional, economic, and physical violence from her partner, and it worsened during her pregnancy. When she thought she could not take it anymore, she tried to go back to her grandmother's house, but her grandmother didn't accept her back since she had already been living in a union. Neither did her father. Only when she had to be hospitalized due to her injuries did her father take her back home. Some other interviewees endured violence from their partners for some years before managing to leave the relationship.

Many of the poor young women are profoundly dependent on their partners, as mentioned earlier, which makes them even more vulnerable in situations of abuse. They lack the education and professional experience to build a life by themselves, so they have no choice but to stay with someone who will take care of them economically. Hence, some have to stay with the partner no matter the conditions, even enduring physical and sexual abuse. Some stories explain very clearly how the process of increased dependency evolves and how the young women see no exit options from abusive relationships. This is similar to findings emerging from qualitative research in Brazil (Perova, Reynolds, & Muller, 2013) which shows that economic dependence was among the main factors inhibiting victims to report their violent partners and exit the abusive relationships. Going back to the previous interviewee, she explicitly refers to her economic dependence as one of the main reasons that kept her in the relationship.

*Interviewer: You never reported him?*

*D: No, at first when I was pregnant, not because I was without ... without ... he gave me food and all that. So ... (woman, P/P)*

At the same time, emotional dependence, particularly in those cases when there are children involved, adds to the difficulties in making a cut. Similarly, qualitative research conducted in

Brazil finds that a majority of women lack the self-esteem to imagine a life of their own (Perova, Reynolds, & Muller, 2013). They are also reluctant to separate and report the abuser, particularly when they have children in common. They recognize the emotional links their children have to their father, and are reluctant to depriving them of these connections as it would make them feel guilty. Similar reasoning is reported in the interviews in Nicaragua. A constant threat of male violence does not only influence women's decision-making regarding sex and contraceptive use, but it limits a woman's capacity to freely express her desires and will. Some of the women victims of violence managed to escape the abusive relationships they lived in as the following example shows:

*K: No. I lived a lot of violence and a previous partner that I had proposed to me to live with him. I went with him at age 15 and I lived 3 months with him and he beat me but I did not stop him, because I was a public shame, he was a Christian and did not like me to walk with him. I did not have confidence in the people with whom I lived, I felt that if I said it, people would think that it was what I deserved for having left my mother. So, but my mom realized because the neighbors heard, some neighbors told her that he was hitting me and then she wanted to hit him but luckily ...with him I experienced all levels of violence, it started with a belt, then it was a closed fist and the last times it was with kicks, sticks, it was a lot, a lot. (woman, P/P)*

Some young women share that their partners were physically violent during their pregnancy. Often the abusers targeted the abdomen, which posed a risk not only to the mother, but also to the baby. One interviewee had to deliver her baby at only seven months due to complications caused by physical violence during pregnancy.

Only one of the participants from the middle-class sample reports intimate partner violence: She was exposed to emotional violence that evolved into physical violence, which is when she decided to end the relationship. DHS data (2006) shows that the prevalence of intimate partner violence is not lower among the middle-class: The proportion of women who reported physical or sexual intimate partner violence ever was actually highest in the third wealth quintile, reaching 32.5 percent and was slightly lower in all other income quintiles (Bott et al., 2012). The interviews in this research show that the cycle of violence is similar when comparing poor and middle-class. They all describe slowly worsening conditions and going from one type of violence to a more severe one. The reactions of the victims show that the emotional dependence is often very strong, resulting in difficulties in leaving. This difficulty is not limited to the poor. However, what distinguishes the two groups is that the economic dependence in which the poor encounter themselves makes them much more vulnerable and puts another significant layer of difficulty to exiting an abusive relationship.

## 7.5 Religious values and women's agency

The Catholic church (and its Evangelic competitors) are very influential institutions in the country according to key informants, shaping values and beliefs among the people, and specifically among the poor according to these statements. The data shows that the church has

direct influence in peoples' lives, and more importantly, the values it transmits frame the way individuals think and act. Many poor participants point to the fact that they go to church regularly (Catholic or Evangelic), and while some do not go, but they still consider themselves 'Christian.' While their level of involvement varies, the importance placed on the institution and the values it transmits is quite prevalent among many of the poor's speeches.

With regard to direct influence taken by the church, it is noteworthy that two young poor women with pregnancy experience mention explicitly that the church they belonged to had some influence on their relationships. In one case, a young woman who was suffering intimate partner abuse decided to take the case to the women's police station with the help of an NGO working in the municipality. When her church found out about her plan, they prohibited her from taking it further. She respected their stance and dropped the case. At the time, she thought it would probably be the right thing not to pursue it, which shows how religious institutions have a potential to form opinions and guide behaviors. Another poor young woman with pregnancy experience learned in church that it was her duty to be more accepting of her husband (who was also emotionally and sexually abusive to her). She states that this advice "helped her not to get separated".

Potentially more powerful than individual guidance provided by the Church is the overall influence of religious values and beliefs on norms, and how these guide behaviors and attitudes. Religious beliefs are associated with less favorable attitudes towards working women (Guiso et al., 2003). Thornton et al. (1983) find church attendance to be associated with traditional gender role attitudes. Traditional norms promoted by religious institutions can be internalized by people and result in specific attitudes, behaviors, and opinions. Those religious values are internalized to influence a number of different dimensions important for this study: the way women see their place in society oftentimes is shaped by the roles that the church promotes. This is particularly relevant when it comes to the definition of the 'good' woman (see earlier reference to 'marianismo' in the Introduction) and the idea of submissiveness and passivity that it transports. This influence also relates to the tabooization of women's premarital sex and the rejection of women's sexual autonomy discussed in this chapter. Some interviewees refer to the values taught by the church when explaining their preference for abstinence and the value they place on virginity.

*Interviewer: Why haven't you had sexual relations yet? (...)*

*G: Mainly where I go to church they have taught me, and it has always been a dream for me, to arrive as a virgin to marriage and honor my parents. (woman, P/NP)*

Moreover, the values taught by the church can also influence the way the poor perceive their capacity to influence their fate, and hence, their perceived agency (Perez-Baltodano, 2007). Perez-Baltodano (2007) argues that it is misleading to interpret Latin American societies as secular societies. He claims that research on politics and development on Latin America have neglected the contradiction of the idea of democracy and the religious culture of 'providencialismo' (or the

reliance on providence), which dominates the region (2015). According to Perez-Baltodaño, providencialismo is a vision of a providing God, which not only generates passivity, but even more so, a pragmatic resignation and tolerance of injustice and inequality. Basically, following this vision, our lives and destinies are not in our own hands, but instead are governed by God in concordance with his plans and objectives. In recent years, in Latin America this tendency has even increased with the simultaneously growing influence and presence of the protestant and charismatic churches, according to the author<sup>101</sup>. Solutions to individual or societal problems are thus not pursued in the political space, since they are not governed by politics, but by God. The multiple references made by the poor women to children being a gift from God (see also Chapter 4), combined with an overall belief that one has to accept what God has foreseen for you, shows how this concept concretely translates into the individual lives of the poor women in our sample. It illustrates their perception of God determining their life outcomes and the little potential they foresee in influencing these outcomes.

In Nicaragua, 84 percent of the population consider religion an important part of their daily lives (Gallup Global Report, 2009).<sup>102</sup> Beyond the sense of whether or not God is important in one's daily life, the profound difference between Latin America and European religiosity (according to Perez-Baltodaño, 2007) relates to the fact that in the European understanding, God does not necessarily determine the destiny of humanity. Furthermore, Ortega Hegg (2006) in his research on religion and politics shows that more than 86.6 percent of respondents of a dedicated survey applied in Nicaragua answered they turn to God often or always if they are in difficulties or facing a serious problem. Similarly, 63.3 percent of respondents search for orientation by the Church regarding social or professional decisions always or often. And finally, 41.1 percent answered that they do not have to worry about their future since it belongs to God.

In Nicaragua, the liberation theology was prominent during the revolution. It emphasized an image of a God who demands the participation of humanity in action, based on an understanding of the Bible (and mainly the New Testament) as essentially a message of social meaning. The poetry of the priest, former FSLN member, and minister of culture, Ernesto Cardenal, is testimony to this.<sup>103</sup> However, after a period of the predominance of the liberation theology during the revolutionary years, 'providencialismo' returned after the electoral triumph of the opposition in 1990 and their links to traditional parts of the Catholic Church. According to Perez-Baltodaño (2015) it was then also integrated into the discourse of the government of former revolutionary Leader Daniel Ortega when he returned to power in 2006. The new bond with the

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<sup>101</sup> According to Pew Research Center's study on religion in Latin America, between 1900 and 1960s, at least 90 percent of Latin America's population was Catholic, while today, only 69 percent of adults across the region identify as Catholic. In nearly every country surveyed on the other hand, Latin Americans have joined Evangelical protestant churches. Nicaragua shows the second highest share of protestant affiliation in the region (40 percent, only slightly below the 41 percent in Honduras and Guatemala).

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.gallup.com/poll/142727/religiosity-highest-world-poorest-nations.aspx>

<sup>103</sup> See for instance the clear call for social justice in his *Psalms of Struggle and Liberation* (1971) or the references to Marxism in *Zero Hour and Other Documentary Poems* (1980).



Church was made official through a mass celebrated on July 19, 2004 in memory of the revolution, with the presence of Ortega, Rosario Murillo, their children, and high members of the FSLN. Ortega won the 2006 elections and in 2007, the implications of this bond between FSLN and Church were made obvious by the criminalization of therapeutic abortion in Nicaragua (Le Monde Diplomatique: Lemoine, M., 2012).

Vuola (2001) argues that without an adequate analysis of the role of religion, it is impossible to fully understand the dynamics between women's sexual and reproductive rights, outcomes, and poverty in Latin America. Furthermore, Vuola (2001) suggests that the Catholic Church is the single most important power factor regarding reproductive rights and issues of sexuality in Latin America (p. 11). Relatedly, she concludes: "It is not overestimated to say that in spite of the levels of secularization the image of woman (and man) in Latin American societies is largely based on traditional Catholic thought and teaching" (Vuola, 2001, p. 28).

Among the middle-class, there are also some references to religious affiliations. While generally fewer interviewees mention such affiliations, those who do refer in some way to religion specify their beliefs and at the same time they explicitly highlight areas and topics in which they distance themselves from the Catholic Church as an institution. While religious, they do criticize the institution of the church and some of the ideas and convictions put forward by it.

*Interviewer: Is he (God) important for the decisions you make in your life? Do you think he has influence?*

*T: Is that I ... No. The problem is that sometimes I doubt some decision or I consider it, because there are many things that they tell us in church regarding what one should do, but I start to think that God does not, well, I feel that the things that they tell us don't really go with what God wants, I feel that God is so merciful that he will not do bad things to us.*

*Interviewer: Do you have an example of that?*

*T: Aaaah ... I am heterosexual, but I have many friends who go to church like me and who are gay, so I do not think they will be punished or that they will not enter the kingdom of heaven because they are gay, then the church puts it as a bad thing, as a barrier, I feel that the church in such cases is the first source of discrimination, so I do not agree. (woman, MC/NP)*

Besides those that show some openness for religion, there are also several cases among the middle-class, who explicitly state not being religious at all. They distance themselves from religion and religious institutions entirely.

*V: I never understood the symbols and the two-faced nature and recently I understood that religion was invented by the human being and not by God, so if one does not have religion that does not have to be an impediment to have a relationship with God. (woman, MC/NP)*

In summary, the influence of the church seems to be less powerful on the middle-class, both in direct and indirect ways. Middle-class participants not only share critical views regarding values put forward by the church, but they also disrespect some of the prescriptions of the institution in their daily lives, as seen throughout this chapter.

## 7.6 Discussion

This chapter discussed how gender norms manifest themselves in the way young women decide over their sexuality and how they can be limited in that decision-making. Furthermore, it provided insights as to how they behave in relationships, and to what extent they are deprived of making decisions and taking control over their life (plans). Finally, it also analyses the way gender norms frame women's aspirations and life plans and may lead to adaptive preferences. Gender norms are particularly powerful when it comes to regulating and sanctioning sexual behavior. The tabooization of women's sexual proactivity and specifically of their premarital engagement can lead women to give up control over the process of sexual engagement more generally. Expectations of passive behavior may interfere with girls' capacity to be assertive and voice their needs and interests, including those related to sexuality. The expectation of enduring and passive behavior contrasts with the possibility to negotiate one's sexuality and have autonomy over one's body. A closer look at both the use of knowledge and information and the effectiveness of access to contraception shows gender roles and norms that restrict the capacity of women to make actual decisions and effectively make use of knowledge and contraception. As seen in the previous chapter, stigma and norms around purity can prevent girls from learning about sex and contraception, giving men a prominent role in sex and contraceptive choices (McCleary-Sills et al., 2012). The stories of the young (poor) women exemplify how societal expectations about women's sexual passivity limit their capacity to make decisions with regard to when or how to engage in sex and whether or how to use contraception.

Additionally, traditional gender roles determine how relationships evolve. Women tend to be assigned the passive role while men are often expected to be proactive and in charge. However, the assignment of complementary roles is, at the same time, an assignment of hierarchically structured roles. The role ascribed to men involves not only the capacity to act and decide (as opposed to accept and endure), but it also involves the role of the economic provider. Subsequently, traditional gender roles can culminate in clear power asymmetries within the couple and in female submissiveness and moreover, economic dependence. Economic dependence makes it difficult for women to decide for themselves as discussed in this chapter.

Perceptions of women's and men's role in society and within the home affect how individuals perceive themselves at present, imagine themselves in the future, and construct their life goals. Specifically, gender norms shape the perception of opportunities available in a society. Expectations about women's and men's roles within the home and in society more broadly have an impact on how individuals see themselves and how they construct their life goals. The conceptions around motherhood might have a very strong impact on questions of if and when women decide to have children, and it may have consequences on how women fill their role as mothers. For instance, if motherhood is essentially the main role girls see themselves in in their adult lives and is socially read as the main marker of adulthood for women, then women will likely opt to become mothers earlier in life. The following chapter will look more closely at the

role of the adaptiveness of aspirations based on context, specifically in a context framed by a lack of opportunities.

With regard to gender-related attitudes and behaviors, I find relatively consistent results for each income group separately, with significant differences between middle-class and the poor. Poor women have more clearly assigned, traditional female roles in relationships, often solely responsible for unpaid care work. They also have less capacity to decide over their sexuality and their bodies. Finally, they tend to associate their place in society with being a mother and a housewife to a larger extent than middle-class women, who see themselves as agents, including economic agents. These differences seem to be aligned with poverty/income lines. While one may believe that context heavily influences a woman's outcomes beyond income and education levels (as suggested in Gage, 1998), in the interviews conducted, differences in educational and economic outcomes are consistent with differences in stated norms and values.

## 8 Opportunities and teenage pregnancy: The role of education and employment

As discussed in Chapter 5, identity develops out of both the individual and social functions of identity: According to Erikson and his successors, both social and psychological processes influence the sense of self. Therefore, context is an essential feature of the self. As Adam and Marshall (1996) highlight, identity is constructed through a ‘person-in-context.’ Empirical research has shown how families, schools, community, and broader societal context shape individual expectations and define developmental norms (Ianni, 1989; Adam & Marshall, 1996; Baumeister, 1986).

This chapter will discuss the role of education and economic and professional opportunities and engagement among the different groups interviewed. It will not only discuss the actual achievements among the interviewees, but it will also take a close look at the differences in aspirations and life plans related to education and work. These life dimensions (education and work) seem particularly interesting to analyze, given the importance they may have in the context of this research as potential competitors to motherhood. Moreover, higher educational achievements and economic engagement have proven to increase women’s agency and hence, may be of instrumental value in the context of this research. Finally, better educated and economically active women tend to share less traditional gender norms, which is also important in the context of the central question this research aims to address: the capacity young women have to make decisions over their lives.

### 8.1 Dropping out of education and barriers to reengagement

Agency, or the capacity to make decisions and implement them, is intrinsically interwoven with education. Around the world, better educated women tend to be better capable to make and implement decisions and choices. Higher levels of education are also correlated with a woman’s degree of sexual autonomy, measured by whether a woman says that she is able to refuse sex, to ask her partner to use a condom, or both (Klugman et al., 2014). Conversely, women who lack education, are more likely to face deprivations in their agency as well (Lloyd, 2012) and tend to marry earlier (Malhotra et al., 2011). Furthermore, education is needed to obtain better-quality jobs with higher incomes. Beyond improved outcomes for the mother herself, research shows that education of the mother is also in the child’s favor. Globally, the children of better educated mothers have better health outcomes; educated mothers also have greater autonomy in making decisions and more power to act in their children’s benefit. Enhanced agency of the mother is a key reason why children of more educated women are less likely to have stunted growth. Furthermore, educated mothers are more likely to take preventative actions, such as purifying water and vaccinating their children; to recognize common illnesses and to treat them; to seek help at the right time; and to use health care services effectively (Klugman et al., 2014). While access to quality education matters for gender equality in general, it matters specifically for better

fertility outcomes: This is also why the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, put strong emphasis on women's education as a means to women's empowerment. Higher education levels are directly associated with lower levels of fertility (and higher age at first conception) and with sexual autonomy. Globally, women with a secondary education have a 14 percent higher probability of being able to refuse sex than women with no education (Klugman et al., 2014). For the key research theme of this thesis, this is particularly relevant because specifically in Latin America, adolescent childbearing has been found to be associated with low educational attainment (Alcázar & Lovatón, 2006; Giovagnoli & Vezza, 2009; Pantelides, 2004; Rios-Neto & Miranda-Ribbeiro, 2009).

In this sample, among the poor with pregnancy experience (31 in total), currently 13 are homemakers, meaning they do not study or work outside the home. Nine have full-time jobs, four work sporadically, and eight are currently studying (some of them work and study). Only five young women (poor with pregnancy experience) have started or are still currently enrolled in university (and importantly, three out of those have been supported by the NGO, through which recruitment was organized for a part of the sample, to pursue this path). Among the poor without a pregnancy experience (19), the picture looks different: only three are homemakers, 10 have full-time jobs, two work sporadically and eight are currently enrolled in university or have a complete university degree. Only five dropped out of secondary school. The educational level of the poor without pregnancy experience tends to be higher compared to those with a child.<sup>104</sup> Those without pregnancy experience study courses such as journalism, tourism, computer science, and English—a broad spectrum of disciplines.

The share of women who are not working or studying is quite significant though among the poor women with pregnancy experience. Relatedly, the phenomenon of the so-called 'nini' population has recently received a lot of attention in research and among policy makers in the Latin America region. The 'nini' term emerges from the Spanish phrase "ni estudia ni trabaja"—youth who do not work and do not study. De Hoyos, Rogers, and Székely (2016) show: one in five youth in the region—totaling more than 18 million people—is living as a "nini" (defined here as individuals in the 15–24 age range who are neither enrolled in formal schooling nor working<sup>105</sup> at the time of being surveyed). Despite the strong economic performance of Latin America during the 2000s—combining economic growth with reduction in poverty and inequality—the proportion of ninis fell only marginally, and the number of ninis actually increased. Women make up the majority of the ninis (66 percent), but over the past 20 years, the share and the absolute number of male ninis increased. Evidence shows that the nini problem is correlated with crime and violence, increasing risks for society as a whole. In Central America specifically, over a third of women aged 15–24 are out of school and not working (De Hoyos, Rogers, & Székely, 2016).

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<sup>104</sup> While the sample for this study by no means is representative, these striking differences between these two groups are important to take note of.

<sup>105</sup> The category of "working" is defined as those who have worked at least one hour in the reference period of the given survey (typically the past week), as well as those who are employed but have not worked during the reference period due to extraordinary circumstances (such as illness, strikes, or vacation).

Between 2004 and 2014, the share of female ninis increased from 34 to 37 percent, well above the Latin America regional average of 28 percent. Moreover, the incidence of young ninis is higher among poorer households, exacerbating existing inequalities and hindering social mobility and poverty reduction in the long run. One of the causes of the nini-phenomenon is early drop out from school. Evidence for Central America shows that drop-out rates differ by gender (Adelman et al., 2016): According to the authors, Nicaragua is the only country in Central America where male under-secondary dropout is considerably higher compared to female, with a 5 percentage point difference between the two. Not unexpectedly, across Central American countries, the declared reasons for dropping out differ by gender: for males, economic reasons are most often cited, while females are more likely to cite personal reasons, including having to perform household tasks. Furthermore, poverty is usually associated with lower educational enrollment rates in Central American countries (and likely elsewhere). Beyond gender, income as well as rural versus urban populations also show significant discrepancies in dropout rates in Nicaragua (Adelman et al., 2016). The decisions to drop out of school are intertwined with the decisions regarding family formation. The most important risk factors that cause young women to exit the labor force and drop out of school are marriage before age 18 followed by teenage pregnancy (De Hoyos, Rogers, & Székely, 2016). Other authors have also found an association between child marriage and becoming a nini (or *nem-nem* in its Portuguese form) in Brazil (Camarano et al., 2006; Tillmann & Comim, 2014).

The nini-phenomenon also has long-term consequences for a society. Székely and Karver (2015) estimate the long-term labor market effects of being a nini during adolescence. The authors find that incidence of ninis indeed has long-lasting negative effects on productivity: the individuals are expected to have lower wages and employment opportunities and overall economic growth can also be affected. However, more than just having a negative effect on the economy, the nini-phenomenon has negative implications on equity. The major concern related with the phenomenon is that it contributes to the intergenerational persistence of inequality. Relatedly, three out of five ninis in the region are from poor or vulnerable households. Higher shares of ninis among poor households exacerbates existing inequalities (Ferreira et al., 2013; Vakis, Rigolini, and Lucchetti, 2015). Related to the main research focus here, the imbalances related to the nini-phenomenon tend to lock in gender disparities and hamper social mobility from one generation to the next (De Hoyos, Rogers, & Székely, 2016).

In this sample, school dropout is connected to a number of different motives. Some of those are completely unrelated to pregnancy. For instance, random external factors out of their control can be the main motivation for dropout, as it was for one interviewee whose mother was selling the house and forcing them to move. While most interviewees claim that education is (generally) 'important' (sometimes without specifying why or what for), there are also a few interviewees among the sample who openly question the value of education. The investment in effort and time does not seem worthwhile in a context where better education will not be rewarded with

better jobs. The main employers are the ‘Zonas Francas’ anyways according to the following woman.

*Interviewer: Yes. How did you decide to leave school?*

*N: First, maybe because I was very temperamental, I did the opposite of what my mom told me, my mom told me: Daughter, study because it's for your good and what do I know! Oh I said, you are crazy if everyone is going to stay in the Zona anyways, you know, the opposite of what she told me, I was a bit, I was a little bit more spoiled ... (woman, P / P)*

As mentioned in an earlier section (Chapter 3), the Zona Franca is a dedicated territory which aims to promote investment and export of goods under an exceptional fiscal and customs regime. The production in the Zonas is exempt from taxes and not regulated by local labor legislation. The majority of workers in Nicaragua’s Zonas Francas are women (Maria Elena Cuadra, 2013).

When exploring more in-depth the process of dropping out, it becomes clear that the interest and attachment to school has been very low even before the women definitely drop out. Dropping out of school is often also a longer process, starting with disengagement and several repetitions of grades at times. In a context with sometimes very little support for education, interviewees start ‘checking out’ often long before the pregnancy. They describe a process marked by a lack of value attributed to education, eventual missing of classes, repetition, lack of connection with teachers and students, and finally the decision to drop out (often triggered by some life event, including marriage, union or pregnancy). In those cases, it may appear that pregnancy was the motive for dropping out, and in some cases, women initially state the pregnancy as the main motive for their drop-out in the beginning of the interview. However, as in the above case, at some point it may become clear from their stories that the distancing from education was initiated way before the actual involvement with their partner.

Several of the poor women with pregnancy experience explain that the most impactful trigger for their distancing from the education institution was not the pregnancy itself, but rather the preceding marriage or union. The stories indicate that entering a union is associated with adulthood, while studying is associated with childhood and adolescence. One woman explains that in her school several women dropped out before finishing secondary, because of their marriages and subsequent pregnancies:

*C: They left with their husbands and ended up with big bellies. (woman, P/P).*

Similarly, other poor women report their relationships were a welcome excuse to stop studying. Among some others, the pregnancy becomes a welcome excuse to stop studying. They may acknowledge that it is not the main reason for dropping out, just one of multiple: mothers that justify their dropping out with the pregnancy often seem to have had low educational attachment prior to pregnancy. Similarly, in a U.S.-based study, Manlove (1998) found that a substantial proportion of teenage mothers who drop out of school were already disengaged from their

studies and had dropped out prior to pregnancy. They are not fully engaged, some have already repeated several times, they do not see any value in continuing education, and they would much rather prefer to spend their time differently. The findings from the data in Nicaragua are consistent with that literature: while pregnancy can be one reason for drop out, many girls would not continue their education even in the absence of pregnancy (Lloyd & Mensch, 2008). In another study, reasons for not remaining in school through adolescence include poor school performance, financial hardship, early marriage, job opportunities, and poor health (Eloundou-Enyegue, 2004). Thus, while a pregnancy might coincide with dropout, it may not necessarily be indicative of a causal relationship. Moreover, the relationship between adolescent motherhood and school dropout is likely to include some degree of endogeneity. As Lloyd and Mensch (2008) note: “the same social and economic circumstances that predispose young women to engage in unprotected premarital sex (and subsequently proceed with the pregnancy rather than abort it)...are, in all likelihood, critical factors in early school leaving” (p. 2).

A lack of parental involvement is indicated by some interviewees and explicitly referred to as one of the main factors that contributed to their dropping out—an issue that will be discussed more in-depth in the following chapter. For most of the poor, pregnancy leads to some form of distancing from the education system. However, not all pregnant interviewees drop out. Some who were full-time students when getting pregnant tended to switch to a Sunday-only school schedule. Some can overcome these difficulties they are facing as evidenced in the interviewees who are pursuing a tertiary education on the weekend (when there are family members available to take care of their children). However, it is important to note that a weekend-based course cannot be equivalent in terms of content and quality to full-time studies. Consequently, those that have to opt for these courses are compromising on quality of education.

This observed distancing process also partially happens because it is perceived to be a more suitable role for an “adult woman.” This means that by attending weekend courses, they are studying mostly among other pregnant girls or young mothers and on a reduced schedule. However, the weekend based courses are often essentially just another distancing step from education, as from there, almost all seem to drop out at some point. One interviewee studied until 5th grade. When she was moving in with her husband and got pregnant, she continued for two more months in school. Then she switched to a Saturday class option, but finally stopped completely because she wasn’t feeling well during her pregnancy. The following poor woman (with pregnancy experience) dropped out at the age of 16 when she was pregnant. She says that back then, it was not common for a pregnant girl to continue school, mainly because of the stigmatization.

*C: Well it is not like before, when I said: well, what are my friends going to say? Oh, look, because she's going out with a man, she is having a belly. Also, for the fact, well, if you already got pregnant, then, you are no longer interested in studying. Now what you have to do is work. You have to look after the child. You have to take care of the child. So, I think, in my case it was more for that, for him, what a pity my friends, and then I was*



*also so, happy. Let's go to that place. Yeah come on. After getting pregnant they look at me and my, look, she's pregnant. So, no. I decided that I was not going to continue studying. (woman, P/P)*

She expects there to be a common association of pregnancy not belonging into a school environment: a pregnant woman needs to take care of the child soon and thus, not study. In the eyes of the community, she does not belong into school, so the participant's assessment. This seems to be a way they are separated (and separate themselves) from other students who are still perceived to be 'children.'

*D: In primary school it is not normal for a girl to be pregnant. So, what they do is, they leave school.*

*Interviewer: Yes? They themselves leave?*

*D: Yes. They leave because they got pregnant because according to them, education is not that, to get pregnant.*

*So ... (woman, P/P)*

As discussed with key informants, it is illegal in Nicaragua for schools to reject girls from school if they are pregnant. At the same time, it is common that women themselves withdraw from their regular schooling after finding out about their pregnancy, as elaborated on by several interviewees above. The process of young women starting to attend Sunday-only school once they are married or pregnant seems to not be initiated directly by the education institutions, but is rather a product of self-selection out of the regular schools and into a parallel education system by the women (and often a reaction to perceived communal norms). Pregnancy, an indicator of sexual activity, means that the girls are forming part of the 'adult' world. They are 'señoritas' (young adult women), not children, as the following interviewee claims, and hence, they do not belong into the formal education system according to common beliefs.

*Interviewer: You told me that you changed the regular school to go attend on Saturdays. Why did you do this? How did you make the decision?*

*L: It is that you know that you enter a state in which your belly grows, then going daily with your uniform, you know that your body changes.*

*Interviewer: Yes*

*L: It's more difficult, you cannot study pregnant.*

*Interviewer: Why?*

*L: Because they criticize you, the people at home and the people of the community, they say, look she is pregnant and studies. That does not look good.*

*Interviewer: Why do you think that is?*

*L: That I do not know well, because it is assumed that all those who go to school are boys and girls, young women, but one going there pregnant that is not common or normal. (woman, P/P)*

Her statement speaks to the fact that it is not necessarily open stigmatization or criticism by the educational institutions or their staff that leads women to drop out. It is the anticipation of such a possible reaction that leads them to drop out, because "the uniform and the belly do not go together." This finding is not completely unexpected: Mathur, Greene, and Malhotra (2003) also

show that young married girls' access to formal and even non-formal education is even more severely curtailed because of immobility, domestic burdens, childbearing, and social norms that view marriage and schooling as incompatible. Attending school and studying are activities that are socially perceived as belonging in childhood, and they are also interpreted as 'not being serious.' One father interviewed describes how both he and his girlfriend dropped out of school because they were assuming that the community was judging their continued presence in school despite being in a union. Especially for boys, the pressure to be perceived as a 'provider' can lead them to drop out of education. It is 'badly seen' in the community to not be working, especially for a husband and if one continues in school, it becomes even more obvious that one is not predominantly working, he explains.

In addition, for those women who see their future exclusively centered around childrearing and being a homemaker, the moment they are married, more education seems pointless. As the following interviewee points out: There is not much value of additional years of education if she already 'achieved' the marriage and hence, she will be economically supported. It would be a lost investment in terms of time and money, according to the interviewee who dropped out at the age of 13.

*Interviewer: What grade did you reach in school?*

*U: I reached the second year. I stopped studying because I left the house, and when I left, I said "why am I going to study, if ..." I was the one who said "no, I'm not going to continue studying, because I already got married, I already have someone who sustains me, then for what?" (woman, P/P)*

On the other hand, that statement is indicative of the fact that education per se is not perceived as of much value in itself. Additional to challenges young women face to stay in school, there are a set of very concrete barriers for young people who have already dropped out of education to reengage. Care and financial costs of education are among the most prominent factors that make re-engagement in education very difficult after one has dropped out. Care can become a severe limitation to women; their realities have changed with a child, and even if they wanted to, they may not be able to come back to study. For instance, one interviewee describes how her daughter was so attached to her and would simply not take a bottle, making it impossible for the mother to leave the house by herself. Sometimes, they are convincingly motivated to build up their education and complete a degree, but the fact that they have to arrange care makes it impossible for many since they are all the main caregivers. Those in charge of children with special care needs face even more difficulties finding an arrangement that would allow for them to study. Another participant expresses strong ambitions to go back to study in Sunday school. In her case, it is the husband who reminds her of her care duties: since she has to take care of the house she should not go back and study. He convinces her that their children cannot be unsupervised on the weekends. Having to find someone to care for their child and being able to pay for that person are among the most common barriers, according to the interviewees. In some cases interviewees state that having someone else care for their child would not be appropriate.

*Interviewer: Do you have someone to help you take care of the child?*

*B: I do, but I do not leave him alone because he is small. He is spoiled. I'm waiting for him to grow a little bit. So that I can already feel that he can defend himself. Because at the age of three they already let you know, they already say -mommy, look, they hit me-, -mommy this. While when they are that little they can't do that.*  
(woman, P/NP)

This latter argument is related to more than just an external constraint of absence of care infrastructure. It also relates to gender norms around the 'good mother' who doesn't leave her infant with a stranger, which potentially makes it more complex to overcome.

Another frequently mentioned barrier by poor interviewees (with and without pregnancy experience) is related to the financial costs involved in pursuing further education. Some refer to initial costs for technical courses they could not afford (related to equipment). Others cannot afford the tuition for their course. Transportation and the lost time (that they could have invested in income generating activities) are additional factors mentioned. One young poor woman (with pregnancy experience) was studying psychology with a stipend at UCA (Universidad Centroamericana) in the first year. Her partner was in his fourth year of engineering at the university, but when they got married they had to make a decision regarding their education, since the indirect costs of having two people studying were too much to take for the young family (tuition, material, transport as well as the missed income during the time they are actually studying). The young woman is very ambitious and determined to return to study, but this will be difficult for her given her current situation. She will need financial support. Besides, the couple's priority is to save for a house, which makes it even less likely. As among other young women in a union or with a child, building a home and a family seem to be a priority over those associated with education. This shows that in a context of limited resources and exposed to a competing set of demands, young women may not perceive education to be important enough if directly compared to other objectives they may be pursuing.

Another key barrier for the poor to continue education after having a child is not necessarily the care burden itself. There is additional pressure to make an income to be able to raise the child. Since it is an immediate and severe need, they likely prioritize income generation over the more mid- or long-term investment of a better education. These cases of prioritizing paid work over education also exist among the poor without pregnancy experience. One young woman explains that she left school once she started living and working as a domestic worker with a family in Managua (at the age of 12). Some, even if small, income can be an attractive immediate alternative to studying. When given the opportunity to work, several mention they thought it was more worthwhile to pursue these opportunities, even if they came at the price of dropping out. Moreover, currently having a job may contribute to making the idea of returning to education quite unattractive. Those who work in the Zona Franca also say they sometimes get extra shifts on the weekends, making it impossible to commit to weekend schooling. There are others, though, who are pressured by other family members to work, sometimes at early ages, because of economic needs of the family. One poor woman with pregnancy experience had to work at

the age of nine to support her grandmother, who was a cleaner. Similarly, another interviewee (also poor with pregnancy experience) enjoyed studying, but was forced to stop because her grandmother requested her to help with the other children she was taking care of. Not only paid work, but also unpaid care work can present an obstacle to women's access to education. Being pushed into different kinds of domestic chores or being the main caregiver for younger siblings can sometimes be very burdensome and prevent girls from engaging in education.

As indicated in these past paragraphs, child work is a very present issue among the poor. Child work not only is a severe human rights concern, but as described in an earlier section (Context), it has immediate negative implications for children's educational achievement. In the research sample, several interviewees start working outside the house for pay as domestic workers (*empleadas*), selling products at the market, or they are taking on significant share of their household's domestic work. One young poor woman with pregnancy experience was living with her grandmother, whom she assisted in her cleaning job at the age of nine. When she was 13, her grandmother died, so she moved in with an aunt who continued to exploit her work. This interviewee insinuates that the exploitative conditions in which she was living pushed her into early marriage. Often, these early 'jobs' are contributing the income-generating activities of their (extended) families of origin. The following woman worked since she was nine years old, helping her mother sell products in the streets:

*S: Since I was small I walked around selling things, I sold caramels, I sold donuts, everything my mom made to sell, she went on one side and I went on the other side, all this neighborhood and the other and the other, I knew them. I worked from the age of 9 until 13, in the sun or in the rain ... (woman, P/P)*

Another young woman was forced by her mother and her step-father to beg for money in the streets since she was 7 years old. If she did not bring enough home, she was beaten up by them. Some of these early work experiences are very risky, involving unsupervised time in public spaces, even during the night, and exposure to strangers who sometimes are abusive (including sexually), according to the reports of the young women.

Contrary to that, middle-class women not only have different aspirations, but they also have the economic means to obtain higher quality education. Most of them attended private schools, which according to some key informants, tend to be higher-quality than public ones. Also, they are exposed to parents and other family members who have high educational achievements and sometimes experiences of studying abroad. Pregnancy affected their studies only marginally, as overall, these women were able to complete their studies despite their pregnancies. Among middle-class interviewees, just one refers to dropping out of education at tertiary level because of pregnancy. This participant was the only one who could not afford to continue studying, as she was solely responsible for the baby and there were too many financial costs involved. This group also have the means to push back towards educational institutions, such as in the case of one interviewee whose school had 'ordered' her to not come to school once the belly shows, but to continue studying from home. She and her family did not agree to that, so she changed schools

and went to another school where she was allowed to attend during pregnancy. Altogether, she only missed one month after the baby was born. Not only does she have the resources to change her school, she also has the full support of her parents to back her up. While in general, the middle-class women deal with their pregnancy without referring to guilt or shame, there is one woman who wanted to hide the pregnancy initially. She stopped going once the belly was big enough to be noticed because she did not want anyone to realize. Still, the time missed in school does not exceed three months in any of the (middle-class) cases. Hence, they easily catch up with the missed material, and all of the interviewees in the sample (except for the one mentioned earlier) continue and complete higher education, some of them with multiple degrees and partially abroad.

Among the middle-class sample without pregnancy experience, all interviewees are aiming for or have already completed tertiary level. Their commitment and objectives are very clearly expressed in the interviews, and they seem to have the tools, resources, and family support to achieve their objectives.

## 8.2 The value of paid work and employment across different groups

Economic opportunities are a catalyzer for agency. Research on norms and agency drawing on data from women and men in 20 countries across regions, for example, concluded that “women’s ability to work for pay... may be one of the most visible and game-changing events in the life of modern households and all communities” (Muñoz Boudet et al., 2012, p. 145). Paid work can increase an individual’s agency by expanding her life choices, increasing her capacity to better support herself and her families, and allowing her to participate more actively in her community (Klugman et al., 2014; Bhattacharya et al., 2009; Panda & Agarwal, 2005). Not all work is equally empowering though—working conditions matter, as does the type of work that women do. This is an important point to raise specifically in the context of one of the communities that participants were recruited from (Ciudad Sandino). The strong presence of the Zonas Francas and the low quality of jobs provided there is a common, emerging theme in the data.

Economic opportunities (both real and perceived ones) are different for young men and women due to gendered responsibilities in the household, varying access to social networks and the labor market, and gender-based violence that affects their ability to consider and seek job opportunities as seen in the data. Chioda (2016) shows that in Latin America labor market decisions differ between men and women. While certain women have changed the way they make those decisions, others have not done so. Looking at labor market trends across Latin American countries, Chioda finds that there is actually significant heterogeneity: some women in Latin America have progressed in terms of their labor market outcomes. Most of the heterogeneity of women’s labor force participation, transitions, and of the quality of their participation varies based on education, marriage status, and presence of children in the household. This speaks to the hypothesis that labor market decisions are profoundly intertwined with those related to family

formation. Several factors seem to have influenced women's economic outcomes in the region. Overall, there has been a growth in female labor force participation which has resulted from significant changes in economic opportunities, closely tied to urbanization, advances in education, changing norms, and the diffusion of time-saving household technologies according to Chioda (2016). Referring to a "quiet revolution" (Goldin, 2006), through which women essentially changed their behavior and entered massively into the labor market, Goldin points to the redefinition of women's identities, whereby women consider their work a fundamental part of their personality. Chioda (2016) shows that this profound change can also be observed among some groups of women in the Latin America region. Her analysis shows that middle-class women may make decisions differently: identity has ceased to be unequivocally tied to their families, unlike for their poor peers. This result resonates very well with the findings from the qualitative data collected for this study. The author extensively discusses the negative correlation between marriage and female labor force participation in Latin America: marriage in the region tends to be associated with a sizeable drop in labor market participation. Single women and married women have very different labor market outcomes. Overall, highly educated women exhibit more attachment to the labor force than those with primary or secondary education. Married women with less than primary are also tied to the labor force because they are compelled to work by necessity. This reflects the typically U-shaped relationship between married women's labor force participation and economic development (Boserup, 1970; Durand, 1975; Psacharopoulos & Tzannatos, 1989; Goldin, 1995; Mammen & Paxson, 2000): Women tend to participate at higher rates in the labor force out of necessity when a country is poor. With growing overall income in a country, wages tend to increase, especially for men. Following this theory, women's labor force participation drops at these stages since their incomes are no longer needed for mere survival. However, then, once countries develop further, education for women increases in parallel with declines in fertility, and women find more opportunities (and less stigma) to work (Goldin, 1995). Chioda (2016) shows that this theory may be adapted to explain differences in women's labor force participation within a country, such as between higher and lower income segments or urban and rural married women. It is interesting to observe that having children in the household is associated with comparatively smaller reductions in the likelihood of participation in the labor market compared to marriage. At the same time, having children in the household does influence the quality of jobs, including sectoral occupations and formality of work. These associations between family formation patterns and labor force participation (and the quality of it) is important in the context of this research. The interactions between marriage and labor force participation and the one between having a child and labor force participation are specifically interesting points. If women drop out of the labor market once they marry to a larger extent than they do when they have a child, then indeed, norms and social roles associated with married women seem to influence these behaviors. Care limitations only play a role at the second and less sizeable drop—the one that happens when they become mothers.

Some of the young mothers interviewed for this study currently have an income. It is noteworthy though that the ones that were recruited through the NGO are much more likely to work. This

is probably an outcome related to the constant (financial, psycho-social, and educational) support provided by the NGO, which places specific emphasis on the economic empowerment of the girls they work with. Several interviewees recruited through the NGO work as social workers for the same organization. Among those not recruited through the NGO, only three poor young mothers have full-time jobs. One used to work for six years for an NGO as a social worker which she recently lost. She is very ambitious and wants to have a meaningful job. In order to make ends meet, she opened a small 'pulperia' (corner shop) but this work is very tiring, it is not what she feels happy doing and also doesn't bring enough money. Others have informal work arrangements, taking care of other people's children, cleaning for people in the neighborhood, or housekeeping for families in Managua sporadically.

Several poor women without a pregnancy experience are economically independent, slightly more than half of this group in the sample. They have jobs in the special economic zones known as Zonas Francas, one of the main employment opportunities in the area, where employers get tax breaks and other incentives. Alternatively they may own small businesses or support family members in their small businesses. This finding shows one of the few dimensions where one can observe a clear-cut difference between those with and without pregnancy experience from the same income group. A few interviewees opened small shops, yet others work in a packaging factory, yet others are accounting assistant or work for NGOs etc. As can be observed, not only is the share of the participants without pregnancy experience in employment higher, but they also have jobs that are of better quality if compared to their peers with pregnancy experience. Still, the opportunities available in the labor market are different for the poor compared with the middle-class.

The work experiences some of the poor gained prior to their pregnancies are indicative of the low-quality of those opportunities available. All of those were low skill jobs and either jobs in the Zona Franca or related to women's traditional roles. Poor women with pregnancy experience have worked as cleaners and domestic workers (*empleada domestica*), taking care of children of family members and doing laundry for relatives or people in the community. Other than that, the poor women have few employment opportunities beyond the Zonas Francas. With Ciudad Sandino lying close to several Zonas Francas, many of the participants have either worked there or have close relatives and friends who did. However, it is commonly perceived as an extremely unattractive option given the infringements on labor rights as discussed in Chapter 3. Several interviews indicate, by referring to personal experiences or to those of family members, that the work in the Zona Franca comes at the cost of enduring harsh working conditions. Several participants remember bad and even traumatic experiences from previous jobs there.

*Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about your work. What are you doing?*

*L: I am now an assistant in the Zona Franca. As I tell you, my work schedule is very difficult, it is complicated, because you know that one has to abide by the rules of the company, it is not a good deal, it is very hard. (...)*

*Interviewer: But what makes you sad? The fact that the work is very hard?*

*L: Yes, you know there are things that are hard, but you have to put up with it there. It's very hard, very heavy, you have to do what they say, if not they'll scream at you. (Crying). They won't even let you drink water sometimes because you have to get work done and being five minutes late for them is a lot. A lot of loss (woman, P/P)*

This young woman seemed traumatized from her experience. Along the same line, others who have worked there, if they can afford it, say they would not take up any future opportunity there given the difficulties and humiliations they suffered. The jobs in the Zona Franca are explicitly mentioned by several as something they did not want to engage in again in the future, given their previous negative experiences. Similarly, the following young woman shares her difficult experience while working in the Zona Franca:

*J: A Zona Franca. There I was working for three months.*

*Interviewer: And how was that experience?*

*J: The experience was terrible because we, the Nicaraguans ourselves, opt to make ourselves bigger, then, because the governments are the Koreans but they agree to you being with the same Nicaraguans. That is, they are your bosses and everything and it is bad because they, it seems that we Nicaraguans raise our heads so much that we want to order people even worse. What they have in that job is like slavery. Because we entered at six forty in the morning, and one leaves at six in the afternoon. It's very stressful. They give you half an hour of lunch, no more. You cannot go to the bathroom many times. If you are sick you lose your travel voucher, you lose five hundred cordobas for the day. In other words, it is a massive exploitation that exists in those types of companies. So, since I could not stand the treatment of the people anymore, the Nicaraguan comrades, then how do I say, I no longer agreed to continue working there. (woman, P/P)*

However, some have to pragmatically admit that the Zona Francas are ultimately the only options available to them. So to a certain extent, they have no choice but to accept these conditions.

The meaning of work significantly differs comparing the middle-class with the poor. Middle-class women have clear ideas on where they would like to be professionally in the medium-term future, and they associate much more with work than income generation. For them, work means self-realization and personal growth. Some of them already have made a career they are proud of. For poor women, on the other hand, having a job is a means to survive and to sustain their children.

Relatedly, the economic aspirations tend to also differ when comparing the middle-class and the poor. Poor women in the sample have often been engaged as homemakers from a very early age onwards. Gender roles, specifically among the poor, do assign housework to women. If they have childrearing responsibilities and are married (or in a union), few of them aspire to find a job in the near future. They often do not imagine themselves doing anything different than unpaid care and domestic work. These 'aspiration ceilings' are related to gender norms that prescribe their place and role as within the home. In line with the findings from Chioda (2016) mentioned above, the decision to marry is often followed subsequently by the decision to become a homemaker—and to not work outside the home. Once they are married, partners tend to influence women's



decisions as to whether or not they can continue to be economically active. For instance, one interviewee used to work in Nestle, but her partner told her to stop. Her father and her partner support her financially now. It is noteworthy that the work as a cashier in a local supermarket appears several times as a job the poor women aspire to. Even those who are currently studying in university name the cashier job as one of their preferred choices they are aiming for. This is a powerful reminder of the low quality opportunities available to them and that they are familiar with. The opportunities for work are either informal, pay very little, are unstable, or are exploitative in nature. In addition, norms around the role of married women and the place assigned to them put enormous constraints on poor women's effective options. There is another case of a poor woman who explains her motivation to work with the objective to have a better life and eat better food:

*N: ... and I liked it and I stayed working, then I left, two years I had to work since I started, two years I worked and then I left, I rested 4 months and I just got back in, because I say (we have) very little and now everything is expensive, now it does not come out ... At least I do not like to eat beans.*

*Interviewer: Yes.*

*N: I like to eat rice that goes with something else not with beans, so then ... I said, no I'm going to work, because kids do not like to eat just anything, so let's say maybe we'll build up the house and we use cement blocks for the front of it, but we didn't have enough resources, so, and everything is expensive, he could not do it by himself. (woman, P/P)*

The presence of the Zona Franca and the low quality of jobs available there can affect educational aspirations in two opposite ways. On the one hand, some say they wanted to study to not have to end up in the Zona. Others say studying is a worthless investment if the only employer around is the Zona Franca.

*Interviewer: Yes. How did you decide to leave school?*

*N: First, maybe because I was very temperamental, I did the opposite of what my mom told me, my mom told me: Daughter, study because it's for your good and what do I know! Oh, I said, she is crazy, if everyone is going to stay in the Zona anyways, you know, the opposite of what she told me, I was rather spoiled ... (woman, P/P)*

For the middle-class women interviewed for this study, work and employment are important references both for the mothers and for those that are not mothers. They envision (or already have) careers. Work is not only for having an income, but also to achieve independence and personal enrichment and fulfillment. Goldin (2006) refers to the difference in perceiving one's employment as a "job" or a "career." If the latter is the case, the individual believes she will be in the labor force for a sufficient amount of time to engage in substantial human capital investment both in formal schooling and on-the-job training, and she will perceive the employment as part of her identity. Such differences are observable when comparing the different groups' references to work, how they perceive work, and what it means to them.

Explanations from the middle-class why to postpone childbearing is indicative of the conflict of options and roles available to these young women. They may experience tensions between home care and remunerated work, as indicated in several interviews. For middle-class women, raising a child is one of the several goals they would like to achieve in their lives, such as travelling, studying, and becoming successful professionals. Those without pregnancy experience all study in university.<sup>106</sup> Of those middle-class women with pregnancy experience, all but one either completed or are enrolled in university, two of them studied abroad, and all have an income of their own. They work in their parents' businesses, or they have independent careers as marketing specialists, bank employees, and designers. Having a child motivates them to work and be independent. They want to be able to provide for their children but at the same time, several of them receive additional support from their own parents.

Some middle-class women without pregnancy experience have a career, built on solid education, including studies abroad. The following woman, who owns a restaurant, managing 14 people, is very proud of her own business, her work and career.

*X: Eeeeh ... this is a type of life rather than a career ... eeeh starting from the hours ... eeeh the pressure, the temperature ... eeeh the relations, the clients, for me for example, the employees. The fact that I am a leader, I have to lead a boat of 14 people, eeeh, deal sentimentally with them and professionally, I have gotten into psychology, now I read psychology books to be able to lead with them, because it is enough ... nobody teaches you how, nobody teaches you, so I have chosen to be well, to cure myself, to heal myself and thus be able to face the ship. (...)*

*Interviewer: And now how do you feel at work - not from the point of view of what you do, but what you feel? Do you like it?*

*X: I feel like a warrior, I love it, it fills me, it's tough, it's impressively tough, but it makes me believe, so I love it, I love work. (woman, MC/NP)*

She is financially fully independent, but money is not the main motivation that drives her. Work is rather a passion for her —she loves to be challenged as one can observe. She describes herself multiple times as a 'leader.' Hence, work is more about her identity and personal growth.

Among those that have not finished their studies, some work part-time, but their motivation is 'to gain experience,' not primarily for the income. Their families support them, so they can focus on education. They describe their decision-making as motivated according to their mid-and long-term planning. For instance, one interviewee says she stopped at a moment when she realized the work was jeopardizing her progress in the English classes. It becomes clear that the decisions are always outcomes of balancing multiple competing objectives—investing in education, generating income, and gaining professional experience.

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<sup>106</sup> As a reminder: This is an obvious result since University campus was one of the entry-points for recruitment.

### 8.3 No role models for poor women

Role models can have an important impact on people's aspirations. The absence of role models, on the other hand, can inhibit young people from shaping their aspirations towards achieving more than what they currently have and are. The absence of role models leads them to adapt their preferences and aspirations—which are the foundations of potential follow-up in form of action—to whatever they deem 'normal' based on what they know and observe. That way, they may replicate what they are observing in their close proximity (among the poor: marked by deprivation and lack of opportunities) and become trapped in poverty (Vakis, Rigolini, & Lucchetti, 2015).

The poor referred almost exclusively to their mothers as role models. The common theme in these references was the sacrifices mothers had made and the difficulties they overcame to raise their children, even if they were left by themselves and living in poverty.

*Interviewer: Is there a particular person in your family that you are proud of?*

*B: Only of my mom because she has tried to get us ahead by any means. (woman, P/P)*

Raising their children under adverse conditions is reason for several participants to express their admiration for their mothers. The fact that they do not selfishly choose their lives without their children, as several fathers referenced in these stories, but that they give everything to help their children, is the main reason for the admiration towards their mothers. They are the ones in these young women's lives that one can rely on.

Many use the exact same wording when explaining why they admire their mothers: "she has moved us ahead"<sup>107</sup>. That caring attitude, of always being there unconditionally for their children, is what they admire, and none of those refer to other aspects of their mothers' lives. The reference to 'fighting' is also quite common when describing their mothers. Generally, the admiration is often related to bringing the daughters (and siblings) up on her own, since several fathers actually have left their families early and are absent. In some of these descriptions of their admiration of the mothers, they explicitly state how their fathers distinguish themselves from that behavior they admire in their mothers:

*S: ... because my father was always uncommitted, everything he did was mistreat her, beat her and also us, then the one who took care of everything, giving us education, food and everything was my mom. (woman, P/P)*

The mention of mothers as main reference points for admiration are common among both groups of poor—those with and those without a pregnancy experience. Young men also predominantly mention their mothers as the main reference point for admiration and pride. Similar to the statements of the women, the admiration for mothers is also connected to them

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<sup>107</sup> In the original citation: "*nos ha sacado adelante*".

sacrificing and dedicating their lives to their children. The young men admire their mothers because they supported the family, because they did not let them fall, because they “put them forward by themselves” (Spanish original: “*sacar adelante*”), and because they “educated them about life,” as one of the fathers says. Some of the young men refer to their fathers in the context of making an effort to provide a living. In those cases, work and employment appear as central points of admiration. While similar in content—referring to sacrifice and dedication to them and their siblings at a young age—there are some but much fewer references of admiration of other family members, who supported them or cared for them. These may be the grandmothers, uncles, or aunts who raised them when both parents had left, as was the case sometimes.

Very few women mention their fathers supporting them. Out of those that do, notably all but one are poor without pregnancy experiences.

*Interviewer: Your dad? Why? Tell me why.*

*J: He, well, for me he is a person who knows how to lead his life quite well because, his father, when he was 12 years old he finished his primary, then what my grandfather did was he decided that he would work differently. So, he has worked all his life in carpentry and now he is a Gypsum worker. He works in the, in, in Vistas del Momotombo. They are companies that are coming out, house construction companies. And I think he is an impressive person because, how he has managed to get us ahead, knowing that he is a person who does not have his studies completed, but he always moves on. He is the one who supports me for my university. (woman, P/P)*

The references to fathers do not exclusively mention sacrifices dedicated to their children. Fathers may be considered role models due to their capacity to communicate well, to support the family economically, to give them the opportunity to study, and to their ability to share love and affection with the family and be sympathetic. For instance, the explanation above is slightly different from those seen earlier relating to the mothers. She admires that her father achieved something in spite of the adverse situation he was in; he made an effort to become a successful worker even without a proper education. A significant share of poor women without pregnancy experience say they have no one in their families that they admire. These statements do not only reflect the absence of role models, they also indicate that the young women realize that in their contexts, they do not have personal learning resources. Among the poor women, only very few referred to role models within their families related to careers or education. Those who did usually mention aunts, uncles, or cousins and sometimes, siblings:

*Interviewer: Is there a particular person in your family that you feel proud of?*

*C: My sister who is 20 years old.*

*Interviewer: Why do you feel proud of her?*

*C: Because, well,... how did I tell you, she at least got her career, she did something ... since I could not, she did it.*

*Interviewer: What did she study?*

*C: She only finished high school, she could not continue studying at the university. As she doesn't have the possibilities to pay for it. (woman, P/P)*

Not only educational attainment but also economic achievement are among the motives mentioned as worthwhile admiring in those specific cases. Others refer to family members who have migrated to neighboring countries to work (Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Panama). One poor woman with pregnancy experience refers to her grandmother as a ‘fighter’ (“luchadora, trabaja”) because she is now 82 years old and still works as a midwife.

One young woman, poor without pregnancy experience, and very outstanding because of her general assertiveness, focus, and ambition, admires her 23-year-old cousin, because she studies pharmacy in her fourth year at the UNAN (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua). That cousin is more than a role model—she gives her advice, she interacts with her as a mentor does. None of the other interviewees make that association between role models and direct provision of support and advice to their own lives. Having a role model they can refer to and having that person be closely connected and able to provide guidance is very important and can provide support to pursue one’s life path. Given that this young woman is exceptional and driven, the availability of this mentor in her proximity may be one of the factors behind her resilience, as will be discussed also a bit later.

The following interviewee shows how the capacity to ‘fight’ (a word she uses multiple times to describe her sister), to pursue a better future and making an effort is reason for her to admire her sister. The sister leaves her husband, her capacity to do things by herself, independent from others, including men, is something uncommon as becomes clear in her sister’s words. The story of the sister shows the framework of aspirational possibilities. She is not someone who achieved a degree in law from the best university in the country, as some of the role models among the middle-class women—her reality is different. Given her circumstances (including poverty, child labor at age 10, marriage at 13 and first child at 14) she is a role model because of her drive and her capacity to resist and actively take her life into her own hands.

*E: Because she (Note: her sister) persisted on her own at the age of 10 years. She left with an uncle of mine and she has moved on alone since then. My mom used to go to parties. She was a libertine, she did not take care of her young children. Then, since the age of 10 years, she fought alone. She got married. At 13 she got married, at 14 she got pregnant. And she has been my exemplary sister, who has moved on alone by herself. She remarried, but she works. She is a person who defends herself on her own. What her husband gives her is separate, but she works for herself. She is a person who has become a strong woman, based on her own experience ...*

*Interviewer: (Laughter) Effort.*

*E: Effort. On her own. She has done her things on her own. That little ranch she brought that up on her own, with no need for anyone to help her, without her husband or anyone. She fought. There are things about her that make me admire her. My older sister just left her husband and she, I don’t know, she is a person that I really admire the most. Each week she gives her food to my sister in los Cedros. ‘I am going to leave it to her’. And she has fought. She has dressed my son, because she has really helped me a lot. In the moments that I have been lonely she has been there. Go ahead! Go forward. Look at me. Look at my mirror. She has two children and herself, on her own.*

*Interviewer: How old is your sister?*

*E: My sister is 22 years old. (woman, P/P)*

Middle-class participants refer to different types of achievements when stating their role models. Such achievements are mostly professional success or a good life independent from anyone else. References to female figures who challenged societal norms and common rules for women are common:

*U: For example, my mom studied medicine and got her specialization in gynecology and then when she was almost 50 years old she went to study law, because she liked that, so, that is what I like because she dared to do something for herself, she studied law because she always liked that. There are few people who dare to study at age 50, I liked that a lot and she was always like that, she went to cooking classes because she liked them, she played her role as a mother and as a citizen, but she also took the time to do the things that she liked, so it is that balance that I like and I would like to have it in my life. (woman, MC/NP)*

The mother of this middle-class woman excelled in terms of education and professionally, but the interviewee highlights her capacity to do something for herself, to care for herself, and to focus on her own development. This is indeed quite notable, and more so that the young woman points out at this specific characteristic. Contrary to the examples given by the poor, this woman appreciates her mother's self-care—and not her role caring for others. Similarly, another middle-class woman refers to her grandmother who was quite adventurous and ambitious despite difficult family conditions: she got a stipend to study psychology in the United States, something that was very uncommon in her times. The capacity to independently build one's path, achieve educational goals, and realize the life path one chose is also at the core of yet another example given by a middle-class woman. Finally, the following woman expresses her own confidence with a very unusual way:

*Interviewer: X. a question. Do you have a particular person in your life that you admire a lot? Or do you feel proud of that person? If so, who would it be? Who would that person be? Why would you feel proud of that person?*

*X: Eeeeh ... I think it could be a pretty strange answer, but I think I could say myself, I think it came from my parents, I feel very reflected in them and I think it would be myself, why that, why I do not know ... I admire people who are always fighting to be better, better than yesterday, not in the economic aspect but in a personal sense and so on. (woman, MC/NP)*

While apparently unusual, her answer reflects not only confidence and self-esteem, but also the satisfaction with how she has been leading her life and how she implemented her choices. She refers to the characteristic of being able to become someone better and fight for one's development and improvement as the central characteristic worth admiring in people. Those responses reflect that middle-class women put a strong emphasis on educational achievements, and moreover, on independence and on taking control over one's destiny. They all in some way refer to that capacity of being in control, exercising agency by framing one's life plans and following through with implementing it. This contrasts strongly with the perspectives highlighted

by the poor women who, as seen earlier, focused instead on the maternal roles of caring individuals who would sacrifice their own objectives to support their children.

## 8.4 Aspirations and life plans across different groups

Aspirations matter significantly for the achievement of one's objectives. As discussed in an earlier section, individuals may adapt their aspirations to what they perceive is possible given their context (Appadurai, 2004, and others, as seen in Chapter 5). Aspirations are important determinants of whether or not young people are willing and prepared to take action on their life course. But in a context of poverty and deprivation, individuals will likely adjust, or adapt their aspirations (Khader, 2009). As Ray (2006) states: "Poverty stifles dreams, or at least the process of attaining dreams. Thus poverty and the failure of aspirations may be reciprocally linked in a self-sustaining trap" (p. 1). Indeed, there is a significant gap in aspirations when comparing poor and middle-class interviewees—importantly, with few nuances comparing the poor with and without pregnancy experience and similarly, when comparing middle-class participants with and without pregnancy experience.

There are some cases among the poor with pregnancy experience who have successfully completed university (or are currently actively involved in completing their degree) and who have related employment aspirations that are consistent with their studies and concrete in nature. Among this group is C. (poor with pregnancy experience), who has a job at a local NGO and studies law at the University of Managua. Notably, her goals are related to independence, a term that is otherwise almost exclusively used by the middle-class. Another poor woman with pregnancy experience is also explicit about her interest in becoming independent economically. It is quite notable how she puts emphasis on the fact that one's own income matters, particularly for women.

*J: Right now, our goal is to want to buy our house so we can have something of our own and in that way go and move ahead in our home. So, we want to buy our things together. That's why I'm agreeing to work because I need my income as a woman. I need my income, I need to pay for my university or the things of the baby. Because my mother what she has taught us is not always to look for what a man gives you, but that a woman has to overcome herself. (...) (woman, P/P)*

Contrary to these two cases, in general, life plans among the poor women with pregnancy experience are very generic. They do not specify concrete objectives, but instead, several interviewees, when prompted for their objectives for their children for instance, claim they want them to "be someone," "be a person," "be happy," etc. Similarly to that, a father summarizes the hope for his children in general terms: "They may triumph in life."<sup>108</sup> For their aspirations, related to their own lives, the answers are similarly unspecific:

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<sup>108</sup> In the original citation: "*que triunfen en la vida*".

*B: ¿Change in my life? Mmm, it would be to get my family out of here, get my mom and my dad out. Give my daughter and my sisters a good life.*

*Interviewer: What do you need to achieve that?*

*B: I need to proof myself. (woman, P/P)*

Some even have difficulties reacting to the question at all, having trouble understanding the question or stating they do not have objectives for themselves at all.

Gender norms that put strong emphasis on the formation of a family govern expectations and aspirations of young poor women around their future. Consequently, many of those who are more specific in their answers frame their wishes for the future mainly around family life. They mention they want to have children or more children, but most of them focus on building a home and having a place for their family. Having an own place is often the next (and potentially last) step they envision to complete their goals of building a family, especially if they are living in a union and have children already. The happiness of the family and the stability of the couple is also among the objectives explicitly stated by several women.

In the sample of poor without pregnancy experience, it is very common that young women aim to have a child relatively early, with only very few exceptions of women who wish to have children after age 25. The perceptions around appropriate age for childbearing vary significantly from those of the middle-class, see for instance the following woman who had her child at the age of 20:

*B: But sometimes I do not regret it because I had him already as a mature woman as they say, I did not have him at 15, nor at 13 like some girls for whom it is hard. Another friend, who no longer lives here, had her baby at age 12, she is about 17 now, the child is about 4 years old. (woman, P/NP)*

Twenty years is a ‘mature’ age, according to this participant. Other poor women without pregnancy experience (between 21–24 years old) share that they are being pressured to have a child by family members or friends, who believe they are ‘getting old.’ As mentioned earlier, many poor women without pregnancy experience had pregnancies soon after 19 years of age, and thus, already at the moment of the interview. Desired age at first birth differs significantly when comparing the poor women to the middle-class. This is also a reflection of what is perceived common in their respective surroundings. The mothers of the poor women with and without pregnancy experiences mostly had them before age of 18 (there are actually only very few exceptions), their siblings often have children before the age of 18, and friends and neighbors similarly so. Teenage motherhood is a common factor in their reference spectrum and always a possibility. However, out of those who did not have a child, almost all point towards the importance of having children at some point, while marriage does not seem to be a major concern. There is a case of a resilient poor woman without pregnancy experience, referred to several times before. She is planning to have children significantly later than the other poor



women interviewed. Her reasoning for the delay is similar to one of the stories of the middle-class interviewees:

*Interviewer: More or less at what age do you see yourself starting a relationship with someone and having children?*

*D: For me to move in with someone I would say maybe 24 or 25 years and already to have a child 26 or 27 years, because if I start thinking well at age 23 I will not have a university degree, that is a lie and the paramount for me is to study and get my degree from the university and that's it, and after I get married have my children at the age of 26 or 27, so that my mom tells me you're going to look like the child's grandmother or my aunts sometimes tell me that, You're going to look like your child's grandmother (laughs) (woman, P/NP)*

Some poor mothers state their main aspirations are rooted in the fact that they have a child now: they want to become a better person 'for their child'. As also found in other research, children can function as a motor for motivation (Duncan, Edwards & Alexander, 2010). They can drive change, growth, and aspirations. Other interviewees state that having a child motivated them to make the effort to get a job or to get back to studying—to be able to answer his questions and teach him, as one young mother stated.

Specifically, with regards to educational aspirations, poor women mostly share low or very vague aspirations. They do not necessarily value education as something that may transform their lives and as a means of social mobility. Many refer to very vague educational aspirations that will likely not materialize. Often the poor young women refer to the general importance of education, but throughout the interview they do not mention any concrete strategies to get back to studying, they do not seem to be actively engaged to pursue more education. Some speak about education as 'theoretically' important, but not actually being part of their near-future plans. One interviewee states that education is potentially a means towards getting a job, but working is not in her plans, and hence, very unlikely to materialize. The instrumental value of education, including a better job, better economic situation, and being able to provide a better life for their children, are the main motivation among those few that state their educational goals explicitly and in a detailed manner.

A few interviewees refer to the way that education makes one grow personally and can be a source of pride, since it is a personal achievement to complete an education. There are a few exceptional cases among the poor, who show strong aspirations for education. This is not a common pattern though. A focus on childbearing and family formation, even early, can be a quite rational conscious choice when one takes into consideration the specific experiences and contexts among certain groups of adolescents (Musick, 1993). As the author shows: Motivations to postpone a pregnancy depend on their perception of the benefit of postponement. Similarly, Geronimus (1997) shows that in the absence of quality opportunities related to work or education, early marriage and childbearing may appear as a rational choice, providing one not only with much needed resources, but potentially also with the markers of achievement or adulthood.

A lack of quality in education can have a severe impact on framing girls' life plans, as also found by Näslund-Hadley and Binstock (2010) in their research in Paraguay and Peru. The authors indicate that school dropouts might result from the low quality of education offered, and generally low expectations of life. As one of the key informants for this study elaborates, education is structured in a way that does not build grit nor lead to attachment, so that the poor are willing to drop out at the first opportunity. If young women perceive the education they could access to not be of value (for themselves, their job prospects, their growth, etc.), they will likely abandon it easily. Hence, when answering interview questions related to the role of education, education is valued in an abstract manner. Interviewees do not refer to its practical use (unless in exceptional cases), and they neither elaborate on the transformative and life-changing investment education can be. Relatedly, key informants stated that education does not address the different needs of different parts of the population, using a uniform approach for everyone which makes it particularly difficult for the most disadvantaged and those with learning difficulties to take advantage of the opportunities according to key informants.

The link between the enjoyment of school and delaying of pregnancy is clear in the data and has been shown in other research. For instance, Danzinger (1995) found that African-American adolescents who possessed a strong sense of enjoyment related to academics and school as youngsters, along with the benefit of strong family encouragement and supervision, were successful in delaying early sex and pregnancy, and they graduated from high school. As mentioned earlier, Duflo, in her Tanner lectures (2012) emphasizes how low expectations in terms of education can lead to disengagement. Conversely, quoting experiments in the Dominican Republic (Jensen, 2010) and India (Jensen, 2012), she suggests that changes in the perceived (or real) returns to education affect enrollment and dropout decisions as well as effort in school and test scores. She stresses also the importance of a support network to achieve (educational) success. Children without the belief and support of her parents and teachers are less likely to succeed. Even if talented, they are likely to struggle in school if their parents or teachers think that they are not talented.

Some poor women mention educational aspirations, but they seem inconsistent with their professional goals. For instance, one woman wants to study tourism, but then, wants to work in a clothes or book shop. Another young woman studies journalism at the university while aiming to become a cashier in the local supermarket. Inconsistency in aspirations may reflect the employment market they are familiar with. The interesting fact that those who aspire to higher educational achievements often do not aspire to careers related to their educational goals may be a direct reflection of the absence of examples of people with better jobs and careers in their proximity—and hence, the quality of the accessible job market. This illustrates how the life paths of the poor are less clearly laid out, one step leading automatically to the following in a consistent and straightforward manner, as was the case when analyzing some of the plans laid out by the middle-class women. Similarly, poor interviewees are typically not able to describe concrete steps on how to reach some of their stated objectives – suggesting those objectives are not very

concrete. For instance, while all respondents replied that education is very important, when directly asked, many did not specify any plans on how to get back into courses or the university.

Among the poor without pregnancy experience, several refer to their interest in more studies. While there are clearly more references to improved education, those references are sometimes equally vague as the majority among the poor with pregnancy experience. They also quite often suggest that the time is not right, that they need to wait until the children are older to be able to study. Overall, however, there are a few references among this group with more credible and consistent education plans. In these cases, the young women elaborate on the relation between better education and better jobs and the overall instrumental value of education. Education is not only a means to any job in their views, it can specifically be a means to secure a job that is different from those available in the Zona Franca.

*Interviewer: What would you like to do for work?*

*B: I do not like the Zona. After high school they got me a job in the market. I was working as a dispatcher and I knew math well there because it's only mathematics. But I would not like to work in the Zona. That's why I want to study to work what I know. If I go to the market, I will stay the same and I will not study and I will always be there. I want to study. (woman, P/NP)*

It is quite interesting that the reference to employment and jobs—and to economic activity, in general—is more prevalent among the poor without pregnancy experience compared to their peers with pregnancy experience. Among this group, young women do consider being economically active, while among the poor with pregnancy experience, the ones that do so are clearly a minority and exceptional even when childcare is available. Importantly these plans for economic independence also come accompanied with an expressed desire for independence—from partners and also, from parents. Desire to become independent from parents is often expressed in the wish for an own place. Having a space for themselves, hence physical independence, is associated with more freedom and self-control by a number of interviewees among the poor without pregnancy experience.

*Interviewer: What things would you like to change in your life?*

*C: Besides my work ... nothing else. I just want to have a house, one that is mine, live by myself, be well, be stable. (woman, P/NP)*

The following participant is an ambitious and strong-willed young woman, who shows resilience along a number of dimensions analyzed in this study (and was referred to multiple times across several chapters given her exceptional attitudes and behaviors). She frames her educational aspirations clearly linked to the plan to avoid dependence from a partner.

*Interviewer: Why so much anxiety for education?*

*D: Well, because well I am really young, I am 20 years old and in reality what one has to do at this age is to study, now the most important thing is study, prepare yourself so that in the future you do not depend on any*

*man, to stand on my own, me, a woman. Study and help my parents is what I would like the most, because my mom works in the market and I do not like it because sometimes the poor woman comes tired and my dad's work is also tiring and he's been working since he was 12 years, so I would like to prepare myself to help them and tomorrow when I have my children give them a better life, which my parents could not give me. (woman, NP/P)*

Middle-class women (with and without pregnancy experience) generally set high goals in terms of education. Education is stated to be of instrumental value by many middle-class interviewees. It is needed to get better jobs and to enable a life independent of others. Overall, most of their ambitious plans and projects are motivated in a two-fold way: by the urge for self-realization, on the one hand, but it also matters instrumentally to achieve a better life and to be economically self-sustaining, on the other hand. This group perceives education as a means to independence and self-realization, and as an essential ingredient towards pursuing the jobs they are aiming to have. They show strong interest and dedication in education—they want to complete their current courses, get an additional Master's degree, or study abroad. Moreover, this dedication is supported by clear tools, and they lay out in a detailed way what are the necessary steps to be taken to materialize their plans. Furthermore, they describe challenges as enjoyable because one grows by surpassing them. Some say openly they like to be exposed to new situations and they enjoy being challenged. One mentions she may quit her job (that she actually enjoys), because she likes to expose herself to new situations. Interestingly, middle-class women express much more attention to 'I' (or: to themselves). They are more concerned about their own development, their identity and they see it as a fundamental right to care about themselves (while interestingly, the voices of the poor women seem to focus on the importance of the well-being of the child, exclusively). Similar as for themselves, their aspirations for their children go beyond 'doing well'—the young women touch upon the importance of identity development aspects.

*Interviewer: What are your expectations regarding the future of your child? What do you need to achieve that?*

*Y: Well, I want my son to be a person able to distinguish the good and the bad for him, for his body, his health, mentally, physically, so he will be able to find something that he likes, if he is going to do something – he should be doing it well. Obviously, for example, there are social requirements of schools, university, fine. But if he wants to do a master's degree and he wants to come out of that really well, I think it's fantastic. I do not want to feel bad spending my money on a "slacker" that I will have to keep dragging behind me, but I would like to raise a person that is independent, that is capable by himself, that always keeps in mind that I will be there for him always, in any way and above all that he shall be a good person, who finds his happiness, whatever he wants to be, how he wants to do it, because I cannot impose anything. I cannot transfer my dreams to him, I cannot translate this to what I have gone through myself, the children do not come to fulfill the expectations of the parents, the children are completely individual beings, a separate individual, that one can influence, because for example they said to me -he will be a surfer- I say that he will be what he wants to be. If he surfs then great, in the end he should find what he loves and do it with love, in the end it is for me what, sometimes we set goals and paths towards what we want to achieve and we do it because it is something that the system puts on you. But we forget a part which is to do something that we are passionate about and to do something with love, because once*

*you do things with love, you will do them well. And this whole money system is a crap thing because it leads you to do things for money and not for love. That is what I like for my son, that he shall be a good man, not a macho. That he shall have a very active female side and I think he has all the potential for this because he is surrounded by a family with a different vision, he has aunts, grandmothers, a mom, we all have a different vision and I have all my friends that are his aunts. I do not think that they will make him a macho, that's what I want, I want to bring up a person to this world that ... when I entered my career I entered with the idea that you want to improve the system and then you realize that you can't. There are people who are fighting - let's do a campaign - I see that the campaign should be at the local level - improve yourself and those around you, try to make them change from what they were before. (woman, MC/NP)*

## 8.5 Discussion

As seen in this chapter, the current engagement in education and work varies when comparing groups, as do the plans to engage in education and work sometime in the future. While few poor women with pregnancy experience are employed, they rarely express concrete aspirations and plans to complete their education and/or to pursue a fixed job to earn an own income. The poor without pregnancy experience slightly differ from that. Not only are they more economically active, but their life plans center less exclusively around family formation as is the case for their peers with pregnancy experience. Contrary to these two groups, middle-class respondents have more concrete aspirations and specific ideas of how to achieve them. They have a very clear sense of their preferences and ideas about how to invest in education, build their careers, and become professionals. Independence was mentioned as a key life objective by several young middle-class women. For instance, they express the wish to have a career in order to never depend on anyone economically.

Generally, these differences are not entirely unexpected. The lives of the poor interviewees are marked by “*cortoplazismo*” (English translation: “short-sightedness”) as one key informant phrased it, a short-term perspective on life and what matters in it. Their interests and objectives are very immediate, and they do not plan in multiple steps towards something bigger as the middle-class participants do. This short-sightedness is rooted in poverty and lack of opportunities, which stand at the core of poor women’s view of life and behind their plans as we will see in the next chapter. The poor have no experience with social mobility, thus the main life objectives for themselves and their children are not linked to it.

Also, not unexpectedly, the perceptions around adolescence as an intermediate period between childhood and adulthood, dedicated to exploration and figuring out one’s plans and preferences, may not exist as such among all socio-economic contexts. In fact, each culture or subculture may evolve its own conceptions and meanings of this period of transition to maturity (Mead, 1958). Indeed, the data confirms that these life transitions are quite different when comparing poor and middle-class. Among the poor women, the transition from childhood to adulthood seems often completed after they are sexually active and/or in a relationship with a partner. From this point

onwards, they start filling the (traditional) role of adult women. For poor women in this study, being in a stable union is the most common marker of adulthood. The poor do not seem to have a strong concept of adolescence as a time for personal identity development and growth, a phase of testing, learning, and making decisions regarding their future. Poor children are quickly incorporated into working life; formation of couples may be quicker as well. In short, adulthood comes in an accelerated way. Thus, the absence of opportunities (and examples) leads the poor to a significantly shortened period of 'transitioning' into adulthood, as there simply are no different options to be tested, paths to be explored etc.. Contrary to that, for the middle-class, adulthood is preceded by a discreet and substantial life phase, with its own characteristics, objectives, and meanings. They actively use this time to test, explore options, develop a path and define objectives. It becomes clear from their stories that there is a common understanding among the middle-class, according to which life and how/what that should be is one's decision. This brings me back to the earlier introduction of Arnett's (2004) concept of "emerging adulthood". Given the criteria he establishes to this concept of a specific life phase, and based on the life stories heard from the different interviewed groups, it becomes clear that only the middle-class really explores this life phase as a distinct one. Contrary to that, the poor transition directly from childhood to adulthood in many cases, with much shortened adolescence in some cases.

Finally, the concept of 'life plans' was strongly criticized during the validation interviews by some key informants. The critique was based on the argument that this may transmit the idea that life plans are something people have or do not have. Hence, it may omit the fact that life plans can only be developed in a certain context, within a setting of people (family, relatives, or neighbors) that can give reference for such plans and overall, within a society that opens opportunities and possibilities to young people. However, as seen before, aspirations depend on context and on observations. Thus, life plans cannot be the same, and it will require someone from a deprived background much more to develop an ambitious life plan than one from a more privileged background.

## 9 The importance of enabling environments to develop resilience

As discussed in previous chapters, one of the main differences emerging from the data are those between different socio-economic groups, rather than between those who had a child and those who did not have one during adolescence. As seen earlier, the two different socio-economic groups do not share the same gender norms, roles, stereotypes, and values. Additionally, the context in which the poor and middle-class youth grow up is different in terms of opportunities available (related to education and work) and the presence (or not) of people that serve as role models due to their achievements related to these two spheres. In this section, I will provide an analysis of differences related to their immediate support systems: their family environments are profoundly different when comparing poor and non-poor. The chapter will first discuss the availability of support systems that immediate families do provide, or the lack thereof. It will then take a closer look at the role of violence in families and communities and how violent environments affect the choices that young women (can) make. Finally, social isolation prominently referred to among the poor women will be the subject of attention in the last section.

### 9.1 Lack of (functional) support systems

The availability or absence of immediate support clearly influences the agency or resilience of young people. Resilient children are those that adapt and transform despite their exposure to deprivation and adversity. Werner and Smith (1992) provide a review of the literature on vulnerability and resilience in children and use the term resilience to describe “a successful adaptation in the individual who has been exposed to biological risk factors or stressful life events, and it also implies an expectation of continued low susceptibility to future stressors” (Werner & Smith, 1992, p. 4). Essentially, resilience and vulnerability have been identified as two ends of a continuum: either reflecting susceptibility to adversity or neutral or positive consequences on the other end (Rutter, 1990). According to Werner and Johnson (1999), three types of protective factors for resilient children emerge most recurrently in research. First, specific attributes of the individual that elicit positive responses from the environment (for instance, pleasant and easy temperament of the child). Secondly, a family environment marked by trust and connections. Finally, support systems available (through schools, neighborhood, community) that reinforce self-esteem and self-efficacy. As will be seen, some of the individuals among the sample of poor with pregnancy experience not only lack access to the second and third factors mentioned above, but also are they exposed to a multitude of overlapping adversities. Outcomes of youth generally worsen if risk factors accumulate over their lives. Subsequently, resilience becomes a less likely outcome (Sameroff, Gutman, & Peck, 2003). With regard to teenage pregnancy specifically, Musick (1993) states that poor adolescents who succeed usually have extraordinary families, who act as buffers and enablers, and also, have unusually extensive contacts with caring teachers, friends, and other reference persons.

Parent-adolescent communication has been associated with positive adolescent outcomes (Smetana et al., 2002). Relatedly, Osborne (1990) using data from Great Britain analyzed

contextual, parenting, and experience-related factors, which substantially increased the chance of resilience in vulnerable children. Osborne defines vulnerability in terms of the family's socio-economic status when the child was five in combination with a specific index based on cognitive and educational attainment. The author's findings suggest that having positive, supportive, and interested parents was a major factor enabling socially vulnerable children to achieve competence. However, personal connections outside the family may also be important: Werner and Smith (1989) find the presence of role models outside the family circle, such as teachers with whom youth identify, to be a protective factor. Resnick, Harris, and Blum (1993), based on a study of 12,000 adolescents, suggest that the best predictor of resistance to high-risk behaviors (violence, substance abuse, and suicide) is a good relationship with one adult (teacher, parent, or mentor of some kind). Smokowski et al. (1999), based on a sample of inner-city high school students in Chicago, find that motivational support from family members and teachers was among the factors that supported positive adjustments.

Hoskins (2014) defines different types of parenting along a typology of high or low control and high or low responsiveness. Authoritative parents are high in responsiveness, are supportive rather than harsh, and encourage active communication, using reason to enforce objectives. This parenting style has been associated with positive adolescent outcomes (Gonzalez et al., 2002; Fletcher, 1999). Adolescents with authoritative parents (or at least a mother with authoritative parenting style) report higher self-esteem, satisfaction, and well-being (Milevsky et al., 2008). Similar research finds positive outcomes from living with an authoritative father (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2006). Adolescents with permissive families have worse outcomes along several dimensions (substance use, engagement in school, lower self-esteem, and lower motivation) (Querido et al. 2002, Ginsburg and Bronstein, 1993). Other research has confirmed that parenting along an authoritative model, including parental involvement and support, is a key protective factor for children and youth, reducing behavioral risks later on (Dubow, Edwards, & Ippolito, 1997; Masten et al., 1999).

Overall, family environments among the poor have been described as problematic along several dimensions by the vast majority of the interviewees. There are a few very positive references to family relations among the poor. Moreover, such references are made by those who, in general, tend to be more agentic, taking control over their relationships and expressing ambitious life plans that include the tools and instruments needed to succeed. Participant P. (P/NP) is 19 years old and lives with her parents and her brother. Not only was she the one taking control over contraception when in a relationship (she decided that she did not want a pregnancy at this point), but she also expresses ambitious plans regarding her education. Her family is very "united," and she seems to have a particularly good relationship with her mother, marked by very open communication. She has a broad support and supervision network: in addition to her parents, her aunts take an active role in her life decisions. Furthermore though, she also states explicitly that her parents have a role in supervising and potentially questioning her decisions. Her relationship with her mother is close, and she communicates a lot with her, consulting on



different issues in a friendly and non-hierarchical way, it seems. Her close support network also includes her cousin, who achieved a career and is always present in P.'s life, ready to help, advise, and support her. Some of the key issues P. raises as important in her relationship with her mother are also emphasized by other interviewees, who have an effective support network at home. Communication and 'presence' of the mother is a very strong motive among those that show more signs of resilience. See also the following interviewee:

*Interviewer: Is there a particular person in your family that you feel proud of?*

*F: My mom. She is a good mom, that's why.*

*Interviewer: What is a good mom like?*

*F: For me, it is one of those that are always ready to step in, they are always asking you. Because she has a lot of communication with us. At the beginning she would take out the words with spoons from us. She would always, always be aware of the school, of the house. She would always be on top of who we were with and those things. (woman, P/NP)*

Another interviewee (poor with pregnancy experience), who also has very solid family ties, similarly stands out for having a very strong outlook and showing autonomous behaviors and attitudes. At the same time, these positive relations are not very common among the poor interviewees. Several dimensions of complications can be observed when they discuss their family relations. Those can essentially be grouped in a lack of presence, connection or attention; tensions and conflict emerging from the changing compositions of families; and intra-familial violence, in some cases.

One issue raised by many women in the sample is the changing family environments. They report that when growing up, several of them were exposed to their mothers' new partners, who sometimes moved in with their own children. Other times, poverty forces them into living arrangements with multiple individuals from their own extended family of origin (siblings, aunts and uncles, grandparents). Both phenomena can lead to increased tension and potential for conflict. For example, one poor woman without pregnancy experience lives with her parents, her brothers, and her sisters in law as well as the children of her siblings. However, she is the only child of both her parents, whereas her siblings are children of either only the mother or only the father. She experiences a lot of jealousies and aggression from her siblings, and the family environment is very tense. She reports her brothers are physically abusive with her at times. While her parents are ready to support her, she often avoids involving them, afraid of further retaliation. Another woman (poor with pregnancy experience) explains that the union of her mother with a man, who had other children with whom she and her brother then lived with, caused severe problems among the different children and the stepfather. This situation resulted in fights at home and finally, in the permanent disappearance of her brother from the family. There are numerous other examples that illustrate the complications arising from changing family environments.

Family structure has an effect on adolescent outcomes as research has shown. Growing up in married, biological two-parent families generally tends to further better outcomes compared to growing up in single-mother households or those with a cohabiting stepfather (Hoskins, 2014; Dubois, Eitel, & Felner, 1994). Indeed, Simons et al. (2004) find that adolescents from divorced or single-parent families are up to three times more likely to show problem behaviors. One of the drivers behind these findings may be the greater investments of parental time, attention, and support (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004). Mother-adolescent communication has been found to be of higher quality (that is: more positive, more supportive) in two-parent families (Lansford, 2004). Relatedly, Booth et al. (2010) found that children do better on average when two (stable) parents build their families, mainly due to the potential to benefit from relationships with fathers.

One problem stated by many interviewees is the either temporary or permanent absence of one or both parents. In some cases, parents are physically present, but the interviewees feel they are not getting any real attention or dedication, that the parents are not available to communicate and advise them. One interviewee (poor without pregnancy experience) lived with her mother, her stepfather, and her siblings (she has 8 in total, but not all of them used to live with her). The relationship with her mother is difficult—she resents that her mother did not spend a lot of time with the children. She and her younger siblings trust more in her oldest sister, who she perceives raised them on behalf of her mother. The permanent absence of a parent is something a number of interviewees struggle with. It is often the father who they report left the family at some point. The most common motive behind the departure is the separation of the couple, but migration for economic reasons is also stated, in some cases. What bothers them is not only the physical absence but that in almost all reported cases, fathers do not keep up contact with their children, meaning they essentially lose their father altogether after he moves out of the family home. The following participant's father left them when she was four years old (to the U.S.). Today he has twelve children with different partners. The first time she talked to him again after his departure was at the age of 13. His absence caused a lot of problems—both economic and more so, emotional ones—the woman states. From the following section, the deep ways in which she was affected by his abandonment becomes clear.

*K: ...physically I could not put a face to him and I had only few memories and ugly memories of him. When we talked among the family, this was a reason for discussion because it had made us very upset his abandonment, in the economic, and the emotional sense, in everything. He was never even a father who would go to another country and at least contribute financially, but instead we survived with my mom's and remembering him caused a lot of trouble between us and pain because especially because we could not be with him.*

*Interviewer: And now you do not talk to him anymore?*

*K: No, by decision then, because I worked for a while in Constelaciones, I had a lot of resentment against him, many things, that I wanted to be able to tell him, complain to him, insult him even, but after I saw that all that affected me more, I tried to digest it and now I feel that it affects me less, also because I am no longer a girl, yes I do live violence, because unfortunately all of us women are much more at risk of violence than other people, than men for example, but now I feel that I never really had him and that therefore it does not affect me. Suddenly it*

*saddens me to come to this conclusion of ... Even last week my mom told me -you know your dad is sick- she says, -you should call him- but I feel like it's like wasting time, because in the end it's uncomfortable to tell him, -I'm K., the one from Caterina- you have to give him a presentation so he knows who he is talking to. That is uncomfortable because ... because I have no interest. (woman, P/P)*

The fact that fathers could and should provide support to their children despite their physical absence is emphasized by a number of interviewees whose fathers also left the families early. Their involvement in their children's development, both emotional and economic support, is important, but it does not happen in the vast majority of cases. Several interviewees share similar experiences: Their fathers separate from their mothers, they leave, and they never return, showing no interest in their children who feel left behind, as clearly described in many interviews. They lose contact completely. Importantly though: not only do they lack the emotional and economic support, they also suffer psychologically. They miss their fathers, and some of them feel guilty and blame themselves for not having (had) a functional relationship with their fathers.

*Interviewer: Did your dad's death really affect you?*

*J: At the moment yes, I mean because maybe we did not have communication, as if it gives us remorse of conscience. (woman, P/NP)*

In addition to having lost her father, this young woman has no one else in her family to talk to—no one to support or advise her. She doesn't feel intimacy or connection. Adolescents need support and advice in this crucial phase of their lives. In contrast to the middle-class interviewees, many among the poor have no one to help them define their choices in a well-reflected way.

The young men in the sample overwhelmingly describe difficulties in the relationship with their own fathers (if they are/were present). They criticize either their lack of interest and involvement, or at times, their authoritarian and aggressive behaviors at home. Others report not having any relationship with their father, despite the father living with the family sometimes. Again, those young men who have been abandoned by their fathers seem to be very negatively impacted by his disappearance. There are only two young men who report on good relationships with their fathers—in those cases, the core family tends to be united and living in the same house. Several poor women also share that their mothers left them at some point. The absence of the mother is often reported by the interviewees with pain and emotional suffering. They don't seem to have come to terms with that distance – much less so if compared to the father absence they discuss. Those for whom this is the case seem to suffer a lot from this life event. Similar as in the cases of father absence, mother absence is most often triggered by the separation of the parents. Participant C.'s mother was pregnant at age 15 and when her daughter was two years old (so at the age of 17), she was thrown out of the house by her father. C. has no contact with her anymore and despite knowing that the father is responsible for the separation, she feels resentment for her mother abandoning her. Another interviewee's mother left the family for a new partner. Ever since then, the relationship with her mother is complicated, and she feels strong resentment for her mother.

In some cases, both parents of the interviewees are absent. This is often triggered by a combination of family separation and migration due to economic needs. Sometimes one parent leaves the family and the other parent then migrates for economic reasons. For instance, one interviewee explains how his father left the family when he was 12 years old, his mother migrated to Panama for six years subsequently, to Guatemala for another five, and now she is in Spain. In the meantime, he lived mostly with his aunt and uncle. The migration processes lead to not only physical distancing from the parents but sometimes also to emotional distance. The family is not a unit anymore as in the cases initially mentioned, but they are dispersed individuals who communicate from time to time. It is clear that the support that parents can give from abroad is mostly economic. Their children cannot really count on them as advisers, who provide orientation throughout their years of exploration in adolescence. When they speak about their families of origin, the distance between them and the other members is more than physical—they have no personal connection. The following interviewee never had any contact with her father and now has only very little contact with her mother or her siblings:

*Interviewer: Do you have a dad and a mom?*

*E: Mom yes, but no dad.*

*Interviewer: You never had contact with him?*

*E: No, never.*

*Interviewer: And with your mom?*

*E: Yes, but little contact. We did not spend a lot of time together.*

*Interviewer: And do you have brothers?*

*E: Yes, but I do not have much contact either.*

*Interviewer: So, your family has no relationship?*

*E: No (woman, P/P)*

In the absence of both parents, children commonly grow up with another family member, most often with the grandmother who replaces the role of the mother. In some cases, they feel the burden that was placed on their grandmothers having to care for a child. They sometimes have to help out their grandmothers with income-generating activities because they could not afford supporting them otherwise. Sometimes, grandmothers carry responsibilities for multiple family members and have no emotional capacity to be actively involved in their grandchildren's lives. The following interviewee points out the generational differences she has with her grandmother—an additional layer of potential conflict for the young women.

*Interviewer: How do you get along with your family, do you have good relations, with your dad ...?*

*Z: Well ... communication, I have not had the opportunity to communicate well with anybody, neither with my grandmother, nor with my dad, my grandmother was the one who raised me, neither with my grandmother, nor with my dad, nor with my mom, because they separated, they left me with my grandmother, then everyone took care of their life. My father has two children, my mother three with me, she has three children, and therefore, they were not interested either in my sister nor in me, the only one who was there aware was my grandmother, but my grandmother has still thoughts of machismo, old thoughts, "the woman has to be in her home." (woman, P/P)*

A lack of communication with close family members becomes clear in this one as well as in several other interviews. In addition to that, the frustration over being left behind is evident: They sense the person that should be closest to them does not 'care' for them, and the emotional impacts of such abandonment seems strong and negative. This relates to the need for love, care, and affection in their lives, which is one of the main motivators for having a child, as was stated by several interviewees. In some cases, children move in with a family member other than the grandmother. These may include uncles, aunts, and siblings. In some cases, the motivation for leaving the child with other relatives is not related to family separation, but poverty and deprivation and hence, the inability to afford the child, according to some interviewees. At the same time, migration is an omnipresent theme among the poor. Mostly fathers, but also mothers or other family members, migrate for economic reasons. This leads to temporary or lasting family disruptions. In some cases, migration occurs within stable relationships in which cases the migrating parent maintains close contact with his family in Nicaragua. However, in most cases, separation and migration are combined phenomena: parents separate followed by one or both partners' migration. Migrating parents leave to the United States, Costa Rica, Panama and Guatemala. All of the women that refer to migrating parents claim their relationships are very weak, and they do not have 'good communication.' They do not have a strong connection and intimacy with their parents, who are unable to be involved in their lives, serve as advisors, or provide emotional support.

Some women not only share stories of the lack of support and absence of a parent, but also, some are thrown out of their houses by a parent. The expulsion from the parents' home may push teenage mothers even deeper into dependence on the partners. Through their parents' rejection, they become extremely vulnerable.

There is a significant difference when comparing the middle-class families and poor families. Among the middle-class interviewees, families were very (emotionally and economically) supportive. Among the middle-class with pregnancy experience, the parents ensured that careers and aspirations did not get derailed by the pregnancy through financial support, guidance, and emotional assurance. In one case, the parents-in-law rented an apartment, hired a maid for the young family, and then financed the studies of the couple in the United States. Even more, in two cases, the women's mothers blamed themselves for not having sufficiently informed, guided, and protected their daughters. While often the parents clearly signaled disappointment, they also gave unconditional support in the cases observed in this sample. More generally, and unrelated to pregnancies, it is noteworthy that middle-class families are not necessarily stable: divorce and separation are no exceptions either among this group. What seems important to emphasize though is that families seem to be marked by a stronger degree of stability. Remarriages happen, but children are not sent to live with other family members, and parents do not fully disappear from their lives. References to severe conflict, dramatic scenes, or permanent disruptions do not exist among this subsample. They have built stable, intimate, and communicative relationships of trust and orientation with their parents, especially with their mothers. Relationships with siblings are also very important and deep in a number of stories. The following interviewee is an

example of a child whose parents divorced and remarried. Despite that situation, the relationships in the family, including with the first marriages and the children from that marriage, are very strong, positive, and 'harmonious.'

*Interviewer: Ok. Tell me a bit about your family. Who do you live with? Who are they? How do they relate to each other? Do you have older or younger siblings? Sisters?*

*X: Ok. I come from a very big family, eeeeh, very particular, it is a family composed of yours, mine and ours. I am the youngest of 7 siblings eeeeeh, the last ingredient that joined the clan.*

*I always grew up and I saw my siblings that were siblings among them, it wasn't, it wasn't, I mean, we were together all the time... it was not, I mean, they were there all the time, so I grew up in conjunction with them. I had a very mature childhood, they never let me second guess, it was always like everything was information (Noise) ... I was quite infected by the six (siblings) that came before me, so yes, I think this was a very important situation, because I really grew up with them, I grew up in that niche of love, of support, of siblings and brotherhood.*

*Interviewer: Was it your dad's second marriage? Was it your mother's second marriage?*

*X: Yes (...)*

*Interviewer: Do you guys fight? How are you with each other?*

*X: Well, obviously yes, they are normal like all couples. They grew up ... I mean, they are a marriage, super good, they are friends, they are quite confident and they have managed to bring us together and unite us all, unite the whole family. Eeeh, among my brothers they are not blood brothers, but we grew up together, so for me to see my two sisters who are sisters hug each other, love each other, cry with each other and love each other is beautiful, it is something very meaningful. ... And now the relationship with the ex-wife of my dad and my mom is also wonderful, there is quite a bit, quite a bit of harmony. (woman, MC/NP)*

While half of the middle-class sample refer to parents being divorced, the way parents manage that relationship with their children after the divorce is reported different from the poor parents in the same situation. There seems to be less complication, more cooperation, and moreover, permanent connection and contact. The divorce does not lead to a permanent abandonment of the child as in many cases among the poor. That does not mean that relationships are always harmonious, but there are no cases of permanent absence of abandonment which is different from the poor. In general, middle-class interviewees share more positive, more supportive, less painful stories about their families. In line with our findings, there is strong evidence suggesting parenting styles tend to differ by socioeconomic status (Conger et al. 2002). Economic stress has been found to be associated with poor parenting. Fathers from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to be more punitive with their children (Lansford et al., 2004) and tend to apply authoritarian parenting style (high control – low responsiveness) (Pinderhughes, 2000). Other work has found fathers from lower socio-economic backgrounds to be less involved compared to fathers from higher socio-economic groups (Yeung et al., 2001).

## 9.2 Exposure to violence in families and communities

Exposure to violence is an immensely important factor in negatively determining the control over one's life: it can erode one's agency and resilience and undermine one's self-image (Golding, 1999). While some researchers argue that violence is a key determinant of teenage pregnancy, this research finds instead that in many cases violent contexts are often behind the motivation to enter a union early. Cases of emotional (and in a few cases also physical or sexual violence), exploitation of her labor, disruptive relations, migration paired with permanent absence and abandonment of father and mother, and violence between the parents make the environment the poor grow up in less supportive overall. All of these problematic factors may lead a girl to feel deeply unsatisfied with her current home, and this can push her to look for alternatives.

Violence within the family has different faces: there are testimonies of violence between parents, between other family members, or violence primarily targeted at the girls. Overall, the references to violence exposure in families of origin is very present in the interviews, and hence, it is part of the reference systems of many of the (poor) girls. This is critical since it becomes part of what these young women learn about women's value in society and it also shapes their expectations regarding their future (see, for instance, the many young women who, when referring to their partners, claim that 'at least' they do not beat them up). A solid body of evidence suggests that there are a number of negative human development costs of domestic violence for abused women, and for their children. Women who experience domestic violence have worse physical and mental health (García-Moreno et al., 2005). In addition, domestic violence survivors are more likely to have sexually transmitted diseases (Morrison & Orlando, 2004) and HIV (Dunkle et al., 2004) and tend to suffer in higher shares from malnutrition (Ackerson & Subramanian, 2008). Research shows that exposure to childhood abuse or to witnessing intimate partner violence within the household as a child increases the likelihood of being exposed to intimate partner violence later in life. Abramsky et al. (2011), using population-based surveys (data from 2000 and 2003, multiple countries), show that exposure to abuse in the early years is associated with the occurrence of intimate partner violence later in life. Similarly, Bensley, Van Eenwyk, and Wynkoop (2003) find that women reporting childhood physical abuse or witnessing inter-parental violence were at a four- to six-fold increased risk of physical intimate partner violence later in life in a Washington State based sample. The following participant (poor with pregnancy experience) reports that the relationship between her parents has always been complicated because of her father's violent behavior, not only towards the mother, but also towards the children, and that her mother managed to leave this abusive relationship:

*V: We got along well, but now, as my mom does not get along with my dad, then my dad ... my mom, they had to... and one day he almost killed her. He always did that, my mom endured it a lot because she had my brother, but after a while she had enough of it, then she found a partner who treated her well, who did not mistreat her, he helped her to do things, he did not force her to anything, the two of them get along well, as it should be in a couple. While with my dad used to order her around and he used her as his employee. He also mistreated us, he beat us, he beat us with his hand, he did not beat us with a knife. (woman, P/P)*

Exposure to violence in their family of origin is common. Some report violence from a sibling, others from other close relatives (uncles, grandparents). Some are forced to work hard by the caregivers they are left with in the absence of their parents. For instance, one woman who lost her parents and was raised by her grandmother is being exploited by the aunt and cousin after the grandmother's death. Violence from a parent (emotional, physical, and sexual violence) is also part of many personal stories. In one extreme case, the father rapes his own daughter when learning about her potential relationship with a young man. While this is an exceptionally severe case, exposure to other forms of violence (physical and emotional) from their parents is portrayed as a common phenomenon. Some parents among the poor are reported to use physical means to discipline children and adolescents, as reported in the following story:

*A: I say then, that my life now is better than before.*

*Interviewer: Yes?*

*A: It's better than before, because my life before, for me, I say, was a martyrdom, because my mother was a person, how should I say, she was very rigid. She raised pigs and if a pig died she would beat me. They beat me up for the animals, you see. Then, I got that crazy idea that I said: No, I'm going to get out of this martyrdom. So, rather, from that age onwards, from 14 years onwards, or at the age of 13, I left my house.*

*Interviewer: At the age of 13?*

*A: At the age of 13 I left my house. (woman, P/P)*

Overall, violence from the mother is reported by several poor women. In these reports, violence is mentioned quite often as a way mothers were trying to educate and 'discipline' their children. Certainly, economic stress aggravates the situation as, for instance, in one case, in which both parents used to beat their daughter up when she did not come home with enough money from begging on the streets (a role they forced her into).

As discussed earlier, several of the poor women have experienced multiple relationships of their mothers, who remarry after their father leaves. Step-fathers, and at times, their children, bring not only the potential for tensions and conflict to the family, in many cases, but sometimes they abuse the young girls in different ways, including sexually at times. Their mothers' lack of support to them in those cases is an additional factor that causes them emotional pain. Furthermore, it illustrates the general vulnerability they find themselves in: with their own father gone, their mother is the closest support person available to them. Several poor women report being abused by their mothers' partners and not finding support, trust, and help in their mothers. In some cases, the mothers even punish them for their allegations.

*Q: My stepfather yes, I saw him many times, he lived there in the house and as he pointed out, he was my dad, for everything he was my dad, when I was already 7, 8 years old I started to develop hate against him because in the night he got up to touch me, and I told my mom and she said it was a lie. When I was about 10 years old my little sister, the youngest one at the time, now she is 13, she saw me crying and asked me what was going on with me, "nothing" I say, "your dad touches me at night" ... the girl went and told my mom, then my mother*



*came and what she did was hit me. When she asked him, he told her it was a lie, then my mother came, grabbed a knife and threw herself on me with the knife. (woman, P/P)*

When the mothers show loyalty with the abuser instead of supporting the abused girls, the young women realize they have no one they can really trust and count on. Their overall vulnerability and loneliness becomes very clear. The following attempt to rescue the daughter from the abuse not only leaves her in very bad emotional and physical conditions, but it also signals to the girl that her mother does not want to or is unable to protect her and unconditionally support her.

*U: (...) That is, as my mother lived with that man, I was raped at age 5 and then, to protect him, she sent me to sleep at my aunt's, but my aunt put me on the floor like a dog, they threw me the bones, it's a life ... I left when I was 13, with my husband. (woman, P/P)*

As indicated in the above example, exposure to violence in their families of origin motivates them to pursue an early marriage, hoping they can escape abuse that way. Unfortunately, it is also not uncommon that the young women have been exposed to various forms of violence, by several people (first in the family of origin and then, by their own partner). Often they have very little chance to escape these different and multiple constellations of violence, but instead, they go from one situation of abuse at home to the next one in the union without being able to break out of the cycle. Finally, gang violence is a factor that was referenced in some of the interviews as one of the key problems in the communities. This has implications on the mobility and safety of the inhabitants. It also has implications on opportunities for girls and boys—for instance, one of the interviewees had to give up her employment because she suffered from several assaults when walking home after work.

It is quite notable that while violence is a very constant and present theme among the poor, there is not a single reference to violence from a family member in the middle-class interviews. Clearly, that does not mean that there is no child abuse in middle-class families, but the apparent difference in the prevalence of the theme in the young women's stories is still quite striking to note. This may be indicative of the fact that economic stress puts a burden on family relations more generally.

### 9.3 Left by themselves: poor women's social isolation

The poor mothers, particularly those with pregnancy experience, are socially isolated. They report having very few friends and also, are often physically constrained to their houses. As mentioned before, gender norms around women's role in the public space drive not only the way family members restrict women's mobility, but also the ways in which women themselves internalize these processes and stick predominantly to the private space. Interestingly, among the poor without pregnancy experience, there are some references to friendship and social networks. It is noteworthy that some poor without pregnancy experience share that they have friends of both sexes. This is certainly not the norm among the poor with pregnancy experiences. After entering

a union and having a child, they become even more restricted to their own house with limited contact to friends, acquaintances, and people in the community. Also, some poor without pregnancy experience share that they engage in free-time activities (such as playing soccer as in the following example)—something the poor without pregnancy experience do not report. Interestingly, there seems to be a reinforcing process among the poor without pregnancy experience. They do not have a child (and/or a partner), which restricts them less to the house, and they tend to have access to more (longer) education and sometimes, to employment. Participation in all of these spheres not only is an expression of greater agency, but the participation in those spheres of public life exposes some of them to more people. Hence, they report having friends from different backgrounds and with different experiences. Such exposure can have an effect on the aspirations and opportunities of these women.

In general, in their communities, there seem to be very few social bonds among poor women, according to the interviews. Men, in contrast, are not only more present in the public spaces, but also, those interviewed for the study report more social contact, activities outside the house, and exposure to individuals other than close family members. Some interviewees explicitly report that there is a lack of trust in the community, especially among women. One interviewee for instance clearly states she has acquaintances but not friends. The issue of lacking trust among people in the community, between neighbors or acquaintances, emerges quite often in the data.

*Interviewer: Do you have friends?*

*E: Practically only at work, but in the neighborhood, I don't have much relation with the neighbors.*

*Interviewer: Why?*

*E: They are very problematic, and they take out information to spread it around. I prefer to stay away. (woman, P/P)*

Along the same lines, a few do mention the fear that others may take advantage when they are provided with a lot of information. People speak badly behind each other's backs, according to the interviewees, specifically when it comes to women's behavior, making it 'safer' to not engage too much.

*Interviewer: To talk a little bit about your friends. Do you have many friends here in the neighborhood?*

*D: No, (laughs) In fact, here in the block I do not talk to anyone, I do not relate to the people here, not because I am not social, but because here in this block there are almost no girls my age and it is true that these people here like to gossip and I do not like that. I do not like to interact with them and I do not have friends. Neither at school because I already graduated and in school I had acquaintances but not friends, I mean, someone to share my stuff or so, no, I do not believe in friends (...)*

*Interviewer: And speaking a bit about the community or following up on this topic of the community. Are there some things in the community where you live that if women do them, people won't like it and they will start to comment badly? Are there things like that?*

*D: Yes, here it is like that, I think that in reality I think that anywhere you do something bad, people are on top of each other and people here watch each other a lot, because here there have been several scandals that maybe*

*the neighbor with the neighbor, then the others are already talking and commenting and so, yes, it happens a lot here, that's why more than anything I do not relate to the people here. (woman, P/NP)*

Several life events have an isolating effect on the poor women, especially on those in a union and with a child. The first step for many is the dropping out of secondary school, then the rules associated to a union or marriage (essentially men not tolerating much presence in public), and finally the care work and changing routine when having a child. However, social interactions and access to networks are important for individual development. Holland and Andre (1987) show that social activities help to foster personality development: involvement in such activities is correlated with self-esteem. Similarly, Rae-Grant et al. (1989) show based on a sample of 4 to 16 years olds that participation in different social activities is related to a low incidence of behavioral problems. Support networks enhance people's potential by linking them to institutions, markets, and other organizations. Deprivation from such interactions may specifically hamper young women's development outcomes. The protective character of social interactions has been shown in research (Gold et al., 2002; Moffitt, 2002; Viner et al., 2012). Similarly, negative correlations have been found between a specific measure of social capital (e.g., measures of involvement in public affairs, and social trust) and teenage pregnancy (Crosby et al., 2006). For some women, they state their only social contacts are friends from school. Once they leave school, several of these bonds do not persist, and the girls do not continue to see or share activities with their friends. Several structural factors come together as seen here that keep them from building social capital, engaging with others, and fostering networks and effectively participate in institutions. In line with Schuurman's critique (2003), this shows that the assumption that individuals can use network connections to move out of disadvantaged positions may be misleading, since it may foster an understanding that the individual is responsible for the deficit and for his or her marginalization (see also Cleaver, 2005, for an overview of the critique of a strongly individualistic view of agency).

Some do have a network, such as provided by NGOs, their church, or the 'Juventud Sandinista.' Nevertheless, one mostly observes social isolation among the majority of the poor female interviewees (with a few exceptions, among those without pregnancy experience, as mentioned before). Once these women become mothers, this process of isolation is usually exacerbated. This change is induced by the fact that their daily routines change when having a child. They have to spend a significant amount of time caring for the child and completing domestic chores. Social isolation as a result of early pregnancy has been found also in Heilborn and Cabral (2011). Summarizing the GRAVAD study in Brazil: the authors show that young women become more confined to the house after giving birth. Notably though, they also show that, a cross-class comparison indicates "that middle-class women do go out more, receive more support for maintaining social relations, and do not experience reclusion as radical as that for young women in the lower socioeconomic segment. The latter are the ones who undertake duties with husband, child, house, domestic work, and so forth, and in whose lives gender asymmetries are added to social inequalities" (p. 5).

In this sample, women report decreased social contacts after marriage and even less so after having a child. Explanations include partners' preferences, a sense that it is more 'appropriate' behavior, or most often, it is just the 'normal' way life is organized. The routine for their husbands does not change as profoundly as theirs. Oftentimes husbands control not only their wives' movements, but they explicitly prevent them from 'going out,' limiting their overall mobility.

*M: Well, he's going to work, from Monday to Thursday. He works four days a week but he takes shifts. So, he goes from home to work. But there are Sundays on which he goes to drink with his friends, he drinks, and so on.*

*Interviewer: And how do you feel?*

*M: I feel bad, because I think that, I mean and I do not go out, I am not having a good time, he does not take me out. And he has the right to go and I don't. And if I want to leave he does not let me. (woman, P/P)*

Another interviewee's partner is quite jealous. He doesn't want her to spend time with her male friends, or recently, he complained about her walking to work jointly with male colleagues. Sometimes women internalize these social rules themselves to live a rather isolated life:

*G: With men, almost, well, no, I do not talk with, with men only with my husband, because you know it is better that way, because if a husband is jealous, better not. (woman, P/P)*

Contrary to the poor, middle-class women are not physically and socially isolated. They have networks consisting of friends, mostly from their schools. But they also have strong extended family relations. Finally, participation in a number of hobbies and extra-curricular activities enable contacts and friendships with a large number of people that become friends. The middle-class women go to university, where they meet a number of women from other parts of town. They spend their days on the university grounds, exposed to different individuals and their respective ideas. Also, the interviewees share that they are engaged in hobbies such as baseball, surfing, and other activities; they go out to the cinema, concerts, and the park; and they eat out in restaurants with their friends. They play sports, do yoga, and meet people in different social contexts. Their lives are much more public compared to the ones of the poor. Their exposure to peers provides them with additional support, as, for instance, in the case of one middle-class woman (without pregnancy experience in adolescence, but who has a child at the moment of the interview). She shares how her friends support her with the child, enabling her to continue with her routines and hobbies (one of which is surfing), despite the fact that she is the first one among her group of friends to have a child.

## 9.4 Discussion

Summarizing, among many of the poor interviewees, one or both parents are not physically present. In those, but also in other cases with both parents present, the environment at home is often unstable, parents are not constantly involved or effectively present in the young people's lives. In several cases, environments are even violent and abusive and the young women lack the support to effectively deal with those complicated situations. Often socially isolated they also do

miss out on potential support and advice provided by other individuals beyond their family circle. In the absence of family support, the work of NGOs and local organizations and their assistance and support to young women becomes even more important to promote learning, knowledge about rights and opportunities, self-esteem, and confidence as evidenced in the cases of some interviewees who benefited from such support. The middle-class family environments are notably different: the parents of the middle-class interviewees are described to be engaged, involved and supportive. Even among those women who experience an early and unplanned pregnancy, parents help to mitigate the potential consequences. This contrast is important to note since the referenced literature points to the significant role of functional and supportive immediate environments in shaping children's resilience.

## 10 The consequences of teenage pregnancy – a gendered poverty trap?

The multiple negative implications and consequences of teenage pregnancy have been thoroughly documented in the literature. As discussed in the introduction to this work, research on the topic has widely shown the many different consequences early childbearing has on the mother and the child, suggesting that teenage pregnancy compromises women's educational, social and economic prospects. The purpose of this study is not to validate or question these quantitative results. However, this work can make an important contribution to the discussion on consequences of teenage pregnancy. In-depth interviews with young mothers clearly shed light onto the multitude of implications and consequences that go beyond the immediate, more tangible, and quantifiable education, health, and labor market outcomes. In addition to that, the analysis shows how teenage pregnancy negatively impacts women's capabilities accumulation and their capacity to form a strong and independent identity. Besides the impact on mothers, I will also discuss the negative outcomes of teenage pregnancies for fathers, particularly related to their human capital accumulation.

While the previous chapters have focused on the ways young women make decisions around motherhood, this one, in turn, focuses on the consequences of teenage motherhood itself and how it may influence further decision-making (capacity) of young women.

### 10.1 The consequences of fathering children of adolescent mothers

Literature on fathers of children born to adolescent mothers is still very limited. Until recently, teenage parenthood has been analyzed almost synonymously with teenage motherhood. One important finding from this study: while after a pregnancy, motherhood is almost a default outcome (granted the baby is healthy and the mother does not resort to illegal abortion), fatherhood is not so. It is the outcome of choice and decision, and the choice of the biological father is often negative with regard to social fatherhood. Father absence has severe consequences on children's development. As Ellis et al. (2003) summarize: the absence of the biological father from the home has shown to be a major risk factor later in life for the child, both for early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy (Geronimus & Korenman, 1992; Hogan & Kitagawa, 1985; McLanahan, 1999). Greater exposure to father absence was strongly associated with a higher risk for early sexual activity and with teenage pregnancy. Furthermore, father absence may be followed by 'stepfather presence': numerous studies have found that the presence of a stepfather augments risks even more (Gruber & Jones, 1983; Finkelhor, 1984; Russell, 1986).

In general, expectations towards fathers are very low among the young poor women interviewed. They do not expect much from them because many of the women seem to have experienced father figures who were only barely engaged or completely absent in their own lives. Indeed, most of the fathers of the interviewed mothers' children in the study were absent. As to be expected,

father absence is more common in cases where the pregnancy was not planned. However, some women say that many fathers initially intended to stay with the mother and the child, but later leave out of a wish to regain their original freedom.

At the moment of the interview, many young poor women in the sample are raising their children by themselves—the father is absent. This is consistent with UNICEF (2007) showing that teenage mothers have a higher risk of being single mothers. Sometimes fathers separate from the woman the moment they learn about the pregnancy. For instance, one poor young woman explains how her partner reacted strongly when they found out about the pregnancy. He literally ‘returned’ her to her mother, left the following day, and never showed up again. Similarly, the father of another interviewee’s child lived with her for one month. Already then, he did not always come home, or if so, just to sleep sometimes. He had a parallel girlfriend and left immediately after learning about the pregnancy. Others opt out at a later stage during pregnancy because they realize that a child in common is not what they want. The reasons for that realization may be related to the type of relationship they have with the mother (which may not be very stable) or to the general idea of fatherhood. Another interviewee’s partner left her when he found out about the pregnancy. He lived in a union, and participant I. had not been aware of this when dating him. Looking back at her story, she feels bitter about him not taking care of his daughter or showing love to her.

*I: And in the eyes of the other girl he only has one child. She does not say that he has another child aside. Yes. That happens with him. And so, I argue with the lady (note: the fatherly grandmother) sometimes because she tells her (the baby), look, your dad loves you. Look, your dad here, your dad there. I say, I'm going to say something, don't throw things on the girl that are not true, because he does not visit her at any time, I say. And do not tell her then, that her dad loves her because I do not even think he remembers her face, I tell her. He does not come, I tell her. (woman, P/P)*

While negative consequences of teenage pregnancy are mentioned by essentially every informant in the sample, the view that pregnancy is an overwhelming experience, not advisable to other young women and that one should rather ‘postpone pregnancy to be better prepared’ is most strongly pronounced among women who are left by themselves and carry the burden without the father. Indeed, single motherhood makes many of the potentially negative consequences of teenage childbearing more difficult to tolerate, according to the interviews. To begin with, stigmatization seems more linked to single motherhood than to motherhood at an early age. Sometimes teenage mothers in a union reproduce this stigma towards other teenage mothers—they differentiate their own cases from those who had a baby, but were not married or in a union when the pregnancy occurred. Also, single mothers are forced to focus on income generation rather than studying, which can be particularly difficult if their schooling is incomplete, as is often the case. They usually turn to informal and low-skilled jobs, instead of investing further in their education and human capital.

Several young women say their partners cheated on them before or during the pregnancy. Oftentimes, the parallel relationships are not sustainable anymore, and at some point, the fathers decide to leave.

*O: It's my daughter's father, that means, I married him, but since fidelity is not 100% certain, I mean, before the girl turned one year he cheated on me, so then it was like, no.*

*Interviewer: You made the decision to split up with him? Or did he abandon you?*

*O: Well, he left the house, he went to live with his girlfriend, I mean, that's how it was like a lapse of time, so to speak, when you hold on until there comes a time and you say 'no'. (woman, P/P)*

No matter at which stage they decide to not remain involved, what is important to highlight here is the fact that there actually is a decision. Men can and do choose whether or not to become social fathers (see Day, 1998, on the concept of 'social fatherhood'). Some initially claim they will support their partners, but then the more concrete being a father becomes, the less committed some are until they finally opt out. In that sense, another poor woman's ex-partner first wants to make himself responsible for the child, but then insinuates the child is probably not his.

A separation from the mother does not have to translate into a non-existing relationship with the child. It does so, however, quite often it seems. Fathers are often completely absent from their children's lives. Young mothers complain their children have 'no father' (thus, no emotional bond to their biological father) and additionally, the fathers most often do not support the young mothers financially. If they do, it is commonly not a regular and stable support, but some eventual contribution which mothers cannot really rely on. At the same time, the little involvement of fathers is nothing unheard of among the other groups interviewed either. The group of poor without pregnancy experience share similar experiences: fathers separate from them during pregnancy, leave afterwards, stay barely or not at all involved personally with their child, and/or do not even provide economic assistance. Participant E. for instance, who had her child at age 20 has no contact at all to the father of her child. She feels very sorry for her daughter to not have a father.

*E: It feels ugly because my daughter does not know her father. Right now, she is small, but when she grows up? (woman, P/NP)*

The ones that do still live with the father of their child mostly report very little engagement of the father in raising the child. The division of labor and subsequent separation of roles is very clearly assigned in most of the couples that participated in this study. Some, for instance, report that partners often leave the house in their free time to pursue hobbies or outside activities and thus, do not spend the majority of their free time with the child. C.'s partner, for instance, spends three evenings a week organizing youth camps. Participant C. is not invited, and she is not even well aware what the activity entails or who else participates—it is excessive, she feels. There are also some cases of partners, who do not live with the mother and the child, but remain somewhat involved or provide some irregular support. It has to be clearly stated that in a context of poverty



and traditional gender norms, single-motherhood is complicated even if experienced later in life, as one poor woman, who had her child at age 20, states that she would advise other younger girls to be careful so they won't end up without a partner.

Father absence is not only reported in the interviews of the young women. In the sample of young men, only three out of 12 live with the mother of the child. Most fathers interviewed are in second relationships and often, their second wife is pregnant or has already had a child. Finally, father absence is also very common among the middle-class, with four out of the five women being on their own. However, the middle-class fathers in the sample provide economically for their child, and, with just one exception, have established personal relationships with the child. One may argue that the economic provision by the father may generally be more common in separated middle-class couples due to the likelihood that middle-class women have better access to legal knowledge and support and thus, make their rights count. However, there is not really any plausible explanation for the emotional ties being stronger in this group. This finding may just be a mere coincidence due to the small sample size. On the other hand, a potential explanation could be that middle-class family references seem less disruptive in general and that the role models of fatherhood and parental involvement may differ when comparing different reference groups. Such different reference systems may immediately translate into behaviors of the fathers themselves, who may aim to replicate more positive father figures than the ones the poor men were referring to themselves in their interviews.

Girls are most often in the focus of the attention when the consequences of teenage pregnancy are discussed. This is why this research also aimed at giving voice to men who father children of teenage mothers.<sup>109</sup> One of the main differences in the consequences for men and women is the simple fact that a pregnancy is visible in women, while men do not 'show.' Beyond that, women carry the burden of consequences of adolescent childbearing. This has to do with the biological and also, social consequences of teenage pregnancy, since they are expected to be the main caregivers. Furthermore, social norms on what is acceptable behavior for men and women play an even more important role here. Fathers, in fact, did not reference experiences of stigmatization associated with fathering children of adolescent girls. Similar to mothers, fathers mentioned several positive aspects of fathering children of adolescent mothers. Having a baby is generally a positive experience, not only for the girls. Most young men share their feelings of happiness and joy about being a father. There is also strong reference to increased structure and direction as a result of having a child. As with young women, fathers reflected that having a child brings stability

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<sup>109</sup> At the same time, the current study's findings concerning young fathers must be put into context. As mentioned in the limitations section (methodological annex), the interviewed men have all been recruited with the help of a local NGO which supports boys and men and seeks to promote their more active role in the care of their children, raise the importance of creating an affective bond, and question traditional notions of masculinity. It remains unclear though how much each of the informant had yet been exposed to these workshops. However, the extent to which the individual interviewees had even participated (or concluded) such workshops was unfortunately not registered at recruitment and when trying to retroactively gain more overall insights for the sample as a whole it turned out to not be possible anymore. The contact in the NGO could not recall the details of the recruitment process since he had not been personally involved.

and responsibility to their lives—essentially, fatherhood gives them a purpose. One interviewee claims he had no structure in his daily routine before having a child. Today he supports his family financially with his own income. Another participant, A., explains that having a child was important and life changing for him. Throughout the interview, he describes multiple times how children motivate one to become a better person and to continue studying:

*A: My purpose of changing myself will be for my son, to not treat him like they treated me, he became to be, my son became a pretty important door in my life (father).*

Fatherhood can also become the source of motivation to grow and achieve in life. It ends idleness, a socially criticized behavior for men that is contrary to the common concepts of masculinity, entailing economic activity and providing for a family. Another notable positive effect from having a child is a gain in respect from their communities due to being perceived as an adult instead of an adolescent, as discussed in the following interview:

*Interviewer: What do you like most about being a father?*

*B: Now people look differently at you, they look at you like at a gentleman, even though I'm 24 years old and I feel like a kid, they look at me as an adult, they respect me, they do not treat me like that mean fucked up guy. People see one differently, they already have more respect and they already see one with different eyes, it feels good, one feels completed. (father)*

It is important to note, though, that despite the positive associations, almost all fathers retrospectively said postponing the pregnancy might have been preferable since they felt unprepared and overwhelmed at times.

Not only the mother's human capital may decrease as a direct result of teenage pregnancy (and as documented in the literature). Fathers' accumulation of endowments could potentially be negatively affected by an early and unplanned pregnancy. Indeed, interviewees show that the impacts on fathers' schooling and educational investment seem to be much more significant if compared to what has been observed in the case of girls. In the literature, there is some evidence showing that teenage fatherhood undermines education. For instance, Nock (1998) finds that men who have children before marriage leave school earlier, have lower earnings, work less per year and are more likely to live in poverty. Similar findings have been suggested by Card and Wise (1978), yet these authors highlight the greater educational deficits for the young mothers than for the young fathers in a U.S. based study. Finally, Sigle-Rushton (2005) uses data of a cohort of British men born in 1970 to show that early fatherhood may initiate pathways to disadvantage, particularly when the event interrupts educational progression.

Fathers' distance from education can impact themselves negatively, but also their children, essentially in two main ways. First, a lack of parental investment in education means education becomes less of a reference point in the lives of these children and may affect their educational aspirations directly. Furthermore though, lack of investment in education will leave fathers less

qualified, thus less prone to secure stable, 'good' jobs, which overall can lead to an intergenerational transmission of poverty, even more so in societies where men are almost exclusively responsible for economic activity and for providing for their families. Indeed, fathers' daily routines and main activities (and lives overall) change profoundly after having a baby. The most significant impact that is present literally in every single interview is the need to prioritize work over any other forms of time use. Young men feel they have to provide for their families. Even if they do not live with the mother of the child, they feel the pressure of 'making themselves responsible,' according to those interviewed here. This responsibility means they have to work more and that they cannot use and spend their time for their personal activities as they could before, they claim. The following participant explains how the baby changed his life profoundly. He had to start working and moved in with his girlfriend. The housing of the young family is provided by his in-laws, and he pays for water, electricity, and food. The aspects he does not like about being a father are that he is not free, he cannot do how he pleases, and he has to work more. He summarizes:

*Interviewer: What did you like least?*

*C: That I am no longer free, before I could do what I wanted. Now I have to be responsible. I used to work only Saturday and Sunday. (father)*

The main difficulty they mention is the process of becoming economically independent from their parents and the pressure they feel to be the sole provider for their families. Similar to the findings of Thornberry et al. (1997), who suggest that fatherhood may create, rather than be a consequence of, psychological stress for young fathers, this study shows that having a child can put an emotional burden on fathers. While overall expectations towards men as fathers seem to be very low in the community, one thing that seems to be commonly expected is financial support. When his first child is born, a father feels pressure to be "responsible" and economically independent from his own or his wife's parents. People in family or community may heighten that pressure by reminding him about that role. The need to provide often comes with a lot of emotional stress and pressure. One interviewee, for instance, describes that the most difficult part of the experience of being a father was for him the pressure to find work and provide. Similarly, another interviewee says his routine changed significantly when his daughter was born:

*J: Yes, because before, more than anything, how should I say, I played football, I would hang out at the neighbors' house, as I had no responsibility for anything, but now it has changed because now the work is a little bit heavier, because they are already two kids who I have to give to, you have to support them, you have to be an example for them ...*

*Interviewer: You have to be an example, what does that mean?*

*J: I mean, example in that sense that they see that their father works, that you will never let them die, that they will have the support of their father. (father)*

This pressure and with it, the lack of control over how to spend their time are perceived by men as a loss of freedom. One young man explains how the urge to provide was so strong that as a

result of becoming a father and having to provide for his family, he started to engage in criminal activities.

Besides economic pressure, the second most prominent negative consequence emerging from the interviews with young men was exit from the education system. Almost every father dropped out of education as an impact of becoming a father. This is somewhat striking because the literature generally discusses the educational impacts of teenage pregnancy on girls. While not all girls in the sample left school immediately (many switched to Sunday schools), all of the men interviewed quit school to prioritize the immediate income earning.<sup>110</sup> Every single father interviewed realized that he would drop out of school at that moment of learning of the pregnancy. Strikingly though, the impact related to education in this sample seems much more significant on young men. The majority of interviewees claim that after becoming a father, they had to prioritize paid work and employment over investing in their own education. The following quotations clearly showcase the interrelatedness of pressure to provide economically and the process of dropping out of education. For instance, participant F. had a child early, his wife was also only 16 years old. His life changed profoundly: he had to drop out of school to prioritize work. His job did not permit him to continue his education on weekends or nights given the change in shifts. Similarly, participant J. quickly decided to drop out of school when he learned about the pregnancy so he could work instead:

*J: At the birth of my daughter, I did not want to study anymore, I wanted to rather work, because nobody was going to give my daughter anything, nobody was going to help me with my daughter, I had to take responsibility for my actions, for what I do. (father)*

Sometimes they start working and studying in parallel but this can become overwhelming. One interviewee explains he dropped out of school because he used to work in the Zona Franca and after that, he was going to university in the evenings, which ended up being too tiring. Many feel that earning money is a better use of their time compared to studying, according to the interviewees. Better does not only mean better outcomes here, but also, it is synonymous with ‘more appropriate’ given the eyes of the community. At the same time, this decision is said to be difficult and painful.

Economic pressure and educational drop out are profoundly intertwined. It is not “appropriate” for a father to be in school, according to the interviewees. This is somewhat similar to the stories from young women: Some interviewed men claim to perceive a social stigma when studying as a parent. They say the societal expectations are for them to be working and providing for their families, as an adult. This linkage between education and adolescence or childhood and the incompatibility of education and adulthood is a very notable finding from the data analysis.

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<sup>110</sup> While at this point it may sound contradictory to earlier presented information that showed that most fathers were absent, not engaged and did not provide for their children (according to the voices of the mothers), there may be reporting biases on that subject on the side of men who may aim to present their own role more favorably.

Participant C. for instance studied until second year. Then he had to start working and drop out of school because of fear from community stigmatization when living with a woman and not working. After young men take this decision once, there is rarely any way back into the education system for them. They simply do not have that option anymore and would have to exclusively focus on providing economically now. Continuing education can also just become too costly for the poor. Participant A. studied until the fifth year and then, started a technical nursing course, but stopped. It was too costly involving transport, time, tuition, and food to eat outside. Similar to the girls though, there is also some indication among men that the distancing from education had already initiated before pregnancy. One participant, for instance, states initially he would have wanted to study more, but he could not because he had to work to earn money for his daughter. Towards the end of the interview, he acknowledges he dropped out of school because he did not want to go anymore. Instead, he preferred to spend his time in the streets. Another interviewee clearly distinguishes his reasoning: he says he dropped out before the pregnancy, so the pregnancy was not the main reason for him to stop school. However, he states that afterwards, it turned into the main barrier preventing him from going back to school. Finally, fathers who do not live with the mothers uniformly state that they are unsatisfied with the limited contact they have with their children and that the mothers exercise control over that relationship. This point may deserve more exploration separately given its under-representation in research. It reveals that while women generally bear the burden of consequences of early childbearing, men may have difficulties in establishing a relationship with their child (see in this context the literature on ‘maternal gatekeeping’, Allen & Hawkins, 1999, Fagan & Barnett, 2003).

Summarizing, upon birth of their children, life also changes profoundly for fathers. It must be emphasized that fathers interviewed for this study seem to be generally more involved in their children’s lives than the fathers who were described by the interviewed mothers. Still, it is noteworthy that however strong the impact on mothers, life for the fathers (at least those who choose to stay involved) may change as well. Not only do they suffer from pressure emerging from social expectations, but they give up their own educational development for low-skilled work in order to sustain their families. Opting for these short-term solutions may have long-term impacts on their economic outcomes and thus, also impact the other family members. At the same time, comparing women’s and men’s stories, men tend to have more of a choice of whether or not to become more than a mere biological parent. An important reflection to share at this point relates to the fact that overall the data material from fathers was much ‘thinner’ in comparison to the depth emerging from the data collected from women with pregnancy experience. Clearly, while there may be several factors at play (including social norms related to men openly speaking about their feelings or not doing so), this can definitely be interpreted as a sign of generally less involvement of the fathers with the situation. As mentioned before, fathers are not ‘essential’ in the views of the individuals interviewed and in the views of the community and society it seems. Hence, they are overall less affected by it.

## 10.2 Excess responsibility, guilt, and a distraction from focusing on the mother's own objectives in life

Most (poor) women interviewed for this study overwhelmingly shared feelings of happiness associated to being a mother. Often the description of this feeling remains quite superficial. Several mothers state phrases like being a mother 'makes me happy,' but often they do not explain further the concrete ways in which motherhood contributes to making them a happier person, and these responses can sometimes be evaluated as merely superficial responses and answering the questions of the interviewer in a 'desirable' way.<sup>111</sup> Participant W., for instance, repeats her 'happiness' about being a mother:

*Interviewer: What does it mean for you to be a mom?*

*W: To feel happy with your child.*

*Interviewer: What did you like most about being a mom?*

*W: Happy. To love him and to hug him (woman, P/P)*

However, some young mothers explain the positive effects from early motherhood by arguing that having a child often brings unprecedented stability to their lives, giving their daily routines some new ways of structure and continuity. Another association that is very common in the data is the need to be more responsible. This new responsibility is something that is evaluated as very positive since it gives them a purpose in life. Someone is depending upon them, so they feel they have to be strong and achieve the best possible outcomes for this human being. These findings are consistent with the U.S. body of literature on the topic, which documents the potential of motherhood to introduce order and structure into an otherwise "chaotic" life (See Edin & Kefalas, 2003, for a comprehensive review of this literature). In our data, for instance, L. says that before the pregnancy, she was living from one day to another ("I had no stability"<sup>112</sup>). Having a child gave her stability. Similarly, participant B. says her life was completely different when she did not have a child. She was spoiled and did not have to do anything—everything was done for her. Pride is another very common expression several poor young mothers use when reflecting about their motherhood experience. B. for instance is proud of the way she is caring for her child. She distances herself from other mothers who do not properly take care of their children:

*B: Now there are many young girls who leave their child with their mothers, with their grandmother, their aunt, they leave him abandoned, they do not give love to the child, from the moment they leave him thrown there so to speak ... from there they will see what to do with his life ... (woman, P/P)*

Similarly, several other interviewees were very happy and proud to be mothers. They express their belief that it is an achievement, something that these young women build their identity

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<sup>111</sup> It may be difficult or not socially acceptable to express one is not 'happy' about his/her child, especially after the baby is born already. Consequently, it may be unlikely an interviewee would consider to not express herself in such ways.

<sup>112</sup> In the original citation: "*no tenía una estabilidad*".

around. Having a baby gives them a sense of purpose. The responsibility they exercise for someone else impacts the way they conceive their own lives. For instance, some report they are now motivated to study seriously. As a concrete example, one participant (poor with pregnancy experience) shares that her own efforts at school are much more ‘serious’ than the ones of other girls who do not have children and for whom school is merely a distraction. According to this young woman, motherhood brings responsibility, and this ‘responsible attitude’ reflects upon other dimensions of life. Those that study with her and do not have any children yet are ‘different’ in her view. They do not take school seriously; it is ‘just a diversion,’ they are immature, and they do not yet take things seriously enough, as someone does who has children.

*S: Those who do not have children do not worry, they do not even care about school classes, they do not care to do them or they won't do the homework, they walk around as if school was a place for fun, of listening to music and they do not have any interest in school because they do not have a vision that they have to study to give a better future to their children. As they have not gone through that stage, they are still immature, they do not know.*  
(woman, P/P)

Some poor mothers reflect that in moments of weakness, they find strength in the child. They find emotional strength in being a mother: “You can’t let yourself fall, because there is someone who needs you and you have to stand up”<sup>113</sup>. Interestingly though, this strength is a product of caring for someone else and of the need to remain functional for this other person, not the product of a genuine care for oneself and one’s outcomes in life. Others also exemplify how the role of a mother comes with new “demands”<sup>114</sup> to oneself. Some (though few) share that their aspirations regarding education and other life plans increased once they became mothers because they wanted to be ‘good mothers’ for their children. The following participant shares how having her son motivated her to go back to studying, mainly due to the fear of not being able to answer his questions when he is in school. Hence, at age 18, she returned to school and finished secondary. Some explain the presence of their child compensated for the loneliness they felt prior to having a child. Children provide them with distraction, but they are also simply company. This is even more so important considering that these young women are often confined to the house and socially isolated as seen before. Hence, children fill the emptiness in the lives of these young women. They explain in-depth how they enjoy having the child around them, having someone to laugh with and to spend the time with. Having the company of a child filled their emptiness. Similarly, having a child protects them from loneliness in the future, as their child will take care of them. It is potentially the most reliable human connection they have.

The middle-class interviewees also cite happiness as the main positive outcome from having a child. The descriptions of motherhood are similarly positive overall for this group. On the other hand, while middle-class mothers also mention happiness as the main association of being a mother, they do not refer to ‘pride.’ All of the middle-class mothers in the sample have

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<sup>113</sup> In the original citation: “No podes dejarte de caer, porque esta alguien que te necesita y tenés que ponerte en pie”.

<sup>114</sup> In the original citation: “exigencias”.

professional careers, which serve as their main reference for a source of pride. This is indicative of them not associating motherhood with a sense of purpose and identity. Their sense of identification emerges rather from their professional careers, hobbies, and activities they enjoy, as well as plans they have for their future.

While becoming a mother triggers a number of positive associations for the young mothers interviewed, their stories also draw the picture of early motherhood as a burden. Moreover though, beyond looking at immediate ‘outcomes’ such as education or labor related ones, the qualitative data sheds light on processes that are triggered by the pregnancy experience which may have long-term consequences on the women’s well-being more broadly. The pregnancy experience leads to a number of decisions that may undermine young women’s agency, increase their vulnerability, and thus have serious implications for young women’s further identity development, accumulation of capabilities, and hence, may ultimately lead to poverty traps. The vast burden of consequences resulting from teenage motherhood is carried (almost exclusively) by the mothers, not the fathers. The fact that women are carrying the baby and are therefore physically impacted is only one (minor) argument here. Furthermore, physical impacts may be exacerbated because the lack of planning may prevent women from accessing timely health care and support. Indeed, several young women who had not planned the pregnancy note that they did not have early prenatal checkups simply because they weren’t aware of their pregnancies. Importantly though, they are the ones who are socially much more impacted because they usually are the ones who are taking the main responsibility for care and child rearing. One participant, for instance, reflects on how the experience of having a child was overwhelming. She states that she had been thinking that having a child was like ‘having a doll.’ Then, when she realized what having a child was actually like, she felt overwhelmed. She did not like that feeling of ‘not knowing how to do it.’ Actually, several young women reflect that they had imagined having a child to be somewhat comparable to having a toy:

*U: Yes ... he was ‘wanted’, because it was a boy, but as I did not know anything really, for me that ‘having a husband and a child’ was like a game, like a toy. (woman, P/P)*

This mismatch between expectations and reality of being a mother—which can be quite an overwhelming reality—is something that emerges as a frequent theme in the data. The overly heavy feeling of responsibility is closely linked to the omnipresent notion of the “good mother.” This ideal is constructed on sacrifice and devotion, and it implies the end to enjoying life for oneself. Participant B. (poor without pregnancy experience) describes how her routine is marked by care related tasks—different from other mothers who are not as dedicated and enjoy themselves. The negative connotation of not spending the entire day exclusively with one’s child becomes clear in her speech:

*B: I get up, cook, get my husband out of house. After that I wash clothes, fix the room, move around, like normal. Bath the child, put him to sleep, find what to cook. After about 3 o’clock in the afternoon I look what to do for dinner. Back to bathing the child because he gets dirty and then I wake up with the same (routine).*



*Interviewer: Is that routine similar or different from the routine of your acquaintances?*

*B: Some are different because they let someone take care of the kids and they go to parties because there are those who have a happy life. They go to parties, they drink, they get home quite drunk, they don't look after their child. They pay someone to take care of their child. (woman, P/P)*

While all groups, regardless of socio-economic level, refer to the sacrifice and devotion of a mother, the definition of what the care and childrearing duties of a mother entail, differ significantly. For the middle-class, the support at home provided by nannies or maids takes over a significant share of the care work. Hence, they have more time for other, non-childrearing tasks, and overall, feel less impacted physically. These different activities also reflect differences in opportunities and aspirations between the groups. While on the one hand, responsibility serves as a source of pride (particularly for the poor women in the sample), it can also feel like a burden. A number of young women emphasize their feeling of being overwhelmed, or feeling like taking good care of their child is 'heavy.' It feels 'heavy' to them, and several emphasize they have not been well-prepared for this experience. They feel they cannot hold up to the responsibility they have to take on, and some describe they initially cried a lot because they did not know what else to do. Some do openly suggest that if they were to have another baby, it would be much later, 'to be better prepared.' The importance of being 'better prepared' is also something several young women suggest when asked what they have as advice to give to younger women. Another woman, though, shares an interesting reflection about how the change in roles (from being an adolescent to becoming a mother and hence, an adult) took away her opportunity to experiment and try different things. Being a mother means one cannot decide easily about one's day to day activities. It entails being determined by that little human being they are now the main responsible person for. Participant S. explains as follows:

*S: Well, I would get up at the time I wanted, sometimes we would get up, say on Saturday and Sunday we would get up late, (...) Later, my mom would have my food ready, oh my mom would prepare food for me, I did not cook, she made me breakfast and lunch, she had lunch ready, then I just came to wash my uniform and, to do homework. I came here to do homework, then I did homework and that's it. I came to the house, sometimes I cooked dinner, sometimes my mom did it, then more than anything she was the one who took care of that. I had time to play, sometimes we stayed at a park playing after school, there where the Chinese (shops) are, and then we were a little bit bigger, I was about 13 years old because I was a little small, and then there by the Chinese shops, we were strolling around, playing, we played. (woman, P/P)*

The middle-class mothers also acknowledge that their lives changed. The weight of the awareness that someone actually does fully depend on you is something also acknowledged by that group. They admit they have to plan in a way that takes their child's existence into consideration. For instance, one of the young mothers says the need to have an own income was suddenly much more pressing than when she was just by herself. At the same time, they seem to be 'dealing' with this extended responsibility in the context where they are very well supported.

Generally, negative consequences of pregnancy and childrearing are more pronounced among those who did not plan the pregnancy. Interestingly, participants' references to stigma from society are contradictory. The majority of poor women did not seem to have suffered much from judgment of their community. This seems to be due to the high prevalence of teenage motherhood in these neighborhoods: another case of teenage pregnancy is nothing 'exceptional.' However, some do mention such exposure, particularly when they do not have a partner. They suddenly became socially isolated and criticized in the community according to their descriptions. Others, specifically those who get pregnant without finding themselves in a more stable union, similarly share observations of being negatively judged and treated consequently. There are also a few cases in which the young women say they became more socially isolated from their peers in the community after their pregnancy was known:

*Interviewer: Do you have friends in the neighborhood?*

*B: Well, those in the neighborhood are a few and they are a bit strange. Now that I got pregnant, the situation changed and it is not the same, because before they came and talked but now they do not, it is as if they changed when they realized that I was pregnant.*

*Interviewer: How do you feel about that?*

*B: Yes, it was hard on me because when one talks to friends one vents and if one doesn't see them, one gets depressed, it is not the same to go to a place and walk in the street, now you talk but you do not play like before. (woman, P/P)*

With the exception of two rather vague examples, avert institutional discrimination (in health or education facilities) is not mentioned in the data. Instead, there are a few quite positive references made expressively with regards to the health sector specifically. The strongest and most painful reactions the young poor mothers refer to are those from their families of origin, despite the fact that they have often experienced teenage pregnancies themselves before. Particularly those women, who had a baby out of a not yet formally established union, as a 'surprise,' or in an unplanned manner, experience that their parents or other family members they live with send them out of the house as a reaction to learning the news.

Poor women express sadness about disappointing their parents. What weighs more though is their often strongly internalized feeling of guilt. Several mothers show understanding for the reaction of their parents, and describe they deserved what happened to them at the hand of their parents. One interviewee says:

*E: That's where I committed the brutality of getting pregnant. That's when. (woman, P/P)*

Another woman was visibly traumatized during the interview when reporting that she had been expelled by her father. The young woman, who moved in with her husband as a consequence, expressed severe self-criticism for what she had done and for destroying the relationship with her father. She cries a lot during the interview, expresses understanding for her father, and justifies his reaction.

*Interviewer: How did you feel?*

*L: At first scared, because you know it was my first time and I did not know afterwards what I was going to tell my dad. I felt like I had betrayed their trust.*

*Interviewer: Your dad's?*

*L: Yes, because it was not what he expected, then there was no way to tell him that I was pregnant, but I had to tell him. (...)*

*L: No. Five days after I found out I was pregnant, I left, we told my father I was pregnant.*

*Interviewer: How did they react?*

*L: That day my dad kicked me out of the house.*

*Interviewer: Your dad?*

*L: Yes*

*Interviewer: And your mom did not do anything?*

*L: No, you know that's the normal thing that the parents get angry and get upset, because they feel super disappointed. (woman, P/P)*

Partners also become angry sometimes when learning the news, obviously more so in those cases when the pregnancy was unplanned. Participant I.'s partner, for instance, was furious when he learned about the pregnancy.

*I: And he was waiting for me and I went to do the test quickly. I already showed it to him. I left the bathroom and showed it to him. He was angry and even broke the little thing in the test and 'don't show it to anyone, please' he said. And he left. He did not tell me ... he got upset, he did not say words to me and he grabbed the test, he scrubbed it, he destroyed it all and he left. He was very angry. He did not say anything, nothing. And he did not appear and me with that, I, my mind was, so many things that came to my mind, thinking, my family what will I say, my studies. My studies, everything went down, I said. What am I going to do like this? And even more him with this attitude he took. I felt lonely at that moment. (woman, P/P)*

He blames her for this pregnancy entirely, suggesting she had purposefully gotten pregnant to tie him to her. His strong negative reaction made her feel very lonely, and she did not know what to do.

The middle-class participants with pregnancy experience share almost no experiences of stigmatization and negative reactions of others. The first reaction of the parents is usually described as shock, sadness, and interestingly, self-blame. Several young women say their parents felt responsible for not informing their daughters well enough and not providing them with the necessary support beforehand to avoid an unwanted pregnancy. They describe very supportive environments that helped them manage the situation in a stable and secure manner. None of the middle-class participants reported extreme reactions, such as being ordered to leave the household. At the same time, middle-class participants without an early pregnancy themselves explain that in their social context, such events are a cause of stigma, particularly in the context of out-of-union pregnancies. One of the women without pregnancy experience herself says that for one of her friends, an unplanned pregnancy (at the age of 24 which, in this context, is early

in relative terms) was a ‘tragedy’ for the family. Interestingly though, there are several accounts of family pressuring the girls to marry the father of their child, which again is indicative of the social norms that condemn children out of wedlock. Importantly, the stigma towards out of wedlock childbearing is potentially larger than the stigma of having children before the age of 19, even among the middle-class. See, for instance, the case of participant Y. (middle-class woman without pregnancy experience) who had her son at the age of 24. While she is initially strongly against a marriage, her father essentially blackmails her to get married, conditioning his continued financial support to the new family on their marriage. While Y. resists initially, she finally accepts after being convinced by an aunt that she could always dissolve the marriage if it wouldn’t work out. In her situation, it would be advisable to show some openness for compromising.

*Y: Then I insisted, I said no, no. A. told me I get married without any problem. But I was the one that was totally closed, because I perceived marriage as a failure and I was terrified with that idea and so I insisted. An aunt of mine came and told me, look, she says to me – you got to see this strategically, right now you need your dad's help and you're quite trapped you want them to accept the guy, you want them to accept your belly, you want them to accept everything at your terms and you do not give them anything- (laughs) then, she says to me - if the only thing that he asks you is that you sign the paper, if it does not work it gets undone - then I said, well, I said to A. – look, I thought about it, let's do it - and in 3 weeks we set up a wedding and we had a beautiful wedding supported by all our friends, with super little money but it came out beautifully, full of love and beautiful. But I can tell you that it was a decision made by my dad. It was between the two of us, but more than anything because it was a requirement that my dad wanted. (woman, MC/NP)*

This description of the decision-making process towards marriage shows that economic dependence is also prevalent among the middle-class. It is not the same severeness of dependence as experienced by the poor. Middle-class women as Y. here would be able to make a living by themselves and without the economic support of their parents, but it would be clearly more difficult for them. Here, her father essentially blackmails her and states that he will only continue to provide for her and her family if she marries the father of the child. Y.’s story also illustrates though how the social pressure to have children in marriage is strong among this group.

Conversely, among the poor, an internalized feeling of guilt seems to weigh even heavier on them than stigmatization from outside. The feeling of guilt arises from pre-marital sexual engagement and from being ‘careless.’ While statistically speaking, teenage motherhood is not rare in the communities researched, family and friends mostly react very negatively when learning the news (especially when not married). Hence, emotionally, most of the young women who had not planned their pregnancy seem to carry quite a heavy burden. They feel they committed a serious and reprehensible mistake. Guilt, shame, and lowered self-esteem are the consequences. Some share very negative feelings about themselves. Having been sent out of their parental home after informing them about the pregnancy, some are left by themselves. Similarly, participant L.’s father threw her out of the house immediately when he learned about the pregnancy. L. shows understanding for her father and guilt (she cries a lot during interview). More than just being sent

her out of the parental home, another woman, participant M., was beaten up by her father and her grandmother when they learned about her involvement with a man.

*Interviewer: You were a couple?*

*M: Yes, we were a couple for about two months. From there, when my grandmother realized she hit me, my dad hit me, she hit me. She came ...because people were saying things ... because she was one of those ladies who are very strict, she told me - if you already live with him, leave the house-. (woman, P/P)*

They would not even allow her to move back in when she comes back after having been abused by this partner—because she is pregnant:

*M: We were fine, but then he changed. He hit me, I left school. That's when I was in 6th grade. He left me locked up. I tried to leave several times ... but that time I managed to escape I went to my house, my grandmother did not want me anymore, she told me that no longer I could stay there, because I was already pregnant, I was already having the baby. And she said no, not even my dad, turned his back on me and so did she. (woman, P/P)*

The pregnancy and the negative consequences it entails are also described as a well-deserved lesson by many—a lesson to teach them since they have been doing wrong. It is very important to note in this context that fathers do not express feelings of guilt, neither related to their sexual activity nor related to having had an unplanned child. They may regret it, but they do not blame themselves for it. This is indicative of the differences in the respective social norms and how men and women internalize those differently.

Having a child has a significant impact on the young mother's time use. Care, while as discussed before, has often been an essential part of their different tasks during the day and, moreover, of their identity conception. However, it suddenly becomes a central mechanism that governs the way they structure and organize their days. Moreover, it can become the central occupation for them, their principal and most important activity which not only takes up all their time, but all their energy, effort, concentration and focus. It becomes 'them'—it structures their identity. Most of the young poor mothers interviewed who had a child during adolescence do not work outside the house. When describing their daily routines, they are very explicit about the different tasks they complete within the house. It is important to note that this means their days are completely filled with preparation of food, changing, and cleaning the child, cleaning the house, and cooking, etc. Their entire lives are centered around the house and the family—physically, emotionally and related to time-use. See, for instance, the description of participant J. (poor with pregnancy experience) below:

*J: Well, in the morning my son gets up at six in the morning every day. The first thing he does is ask for his bottle of milk. Which I already prepare and give it to him right there, in bed, because he is lazy. After that, I get up, I feed him. In the morning, in the morning he gets banana, biscuits, yogurt and then he is usually having his bath. He falls asleep. I already stay up doing things, washing, cleaning. After he gets up, he gets his lunch.*

*Because at my mom's we switch using the kitchen. Because, as we are both there, then, I like that, I almost like it. So, I'm cooking there and there I make my lunch, my dinner. I come back here again and clean in the afternoon. I take the kid out in the afternoon for a while to have him ride a cart that they just bought him. Then, I go for a walk with him. Then I take him to his grandmother. (woman, P/P)*

As stated above, poor young mothers have very limited time to undertake activities other than care related ones or those related to domestic work. These become secondary—in order, importance, and focus. As one can see from the reports, the care related duties<sup>115</sup> take over the whole day for some of the young women. At the same time, the way these young women talk about care also reflect the importance these tasks have for their identity. They define themselves through what they do and how they do it. For instance, participant G. (poor with pregnancy experience) puts a very strong emphasis on cleaning and on keeping her children clean in her interview. She bathes one of the children up to five times a day, she says:

*G: This, when I get up, I make breakfast, I get my two girls dressed so they can go to school, I'll drop them at six forty-five, I'll drop them in school, after I come back from school, from dropping them at school, I sweep the patio, I clean, I wash the dishes, I do everything, everything concerning the house. After that I bathe the child. And after I bathe the child, I cook. (...) You could see how I was doing right now when I was just sweeping the yard. (Laughter) Dirty, dirty, dirty. Then, I had to bathe again and then, normal.*

*Interviewer: Yes.*

*G: He has a bath five times a day. (woman, P/P)*

Oftentimes, they become the main caregivers and housekeepers for other family members, their mothers, sisters, and in-laws, who may have paid jobs and for whom it is convenient that the young mothers take on their domestic chores. In these cases, they do most of the housework for the extended family. During the day they stay home and take care of the siblings' children and homework. At the same time, and as noted before, for some not much changes with having a child. They had already been in charge of domestic tasks prior to having a child. Both groups of poor women (those with and those without pregnancies before age 19) have been engaged in care work prior to having their own children, caring for their younger siblings and for elderly or sick family members. Others have been very involved in conducting house work in their families of origin. At the same time, some of those that do not yet have a child are also engaged in housework most of the day. For instance, the case of participant I. shows how care work may be transferred to other women in the household and impact their capacity to generate an income. I. watches her sister's child during the day as the sister has a fixed job in the Zona Franca. In the

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<sup>115</sup> Interestingly, the care definition and childrearing objectives among the poor stress the fulfillment of basic needs—mainly providing the child with a clean environment and food, while the definition of the middle-class is much more detailed and includes mental stimulation.

absence of care infrastructure, someone has to provide care to the children in the household, and it is usually another female family member.

Overall, the girls' days tend to be longer compared to the ones of their partners who usually have a job outside the house, who get up later, come back and go to bed earlier according to the interviewed women.<sup>116</sup> While there are clearly some overlaps between the poor women who had a child before age 19 with those who had one later, it is noteworthy that the latter group does not seem to construct their sense of identity as much through care as the ones who had a child in their adolescence. A share of the poor without pregnancy experience are economically active, as already previously discussed. This means that those women are more affected by overlong work days, but they are less stuck in a situation where care and unpaid work become their main focus of attention and source of identification.

For the middle-class women instead, care duties are taken over by some other person, usually poorer women, nannies, and maids. Hiring low wage, female staff to take over care and domestic work is very common among middle-class families. Therefore, the implications of having a child on their personal time use is less severe among these women. Moreover, they do not identify through those care-related tasks. Several of them explicitly say that their daily routine did not change as a result of the pregnancy. This lack of shift in activities is also accompanied by the absence of a shift in their life plan. They still pursue the same objectives and for those, they need to continue with the same tasks: studying, socially interacting with friends and family, practicing hobbies and the like.

While the provision of child care could be easily suggested as a first-hand way of overcoming the barriers towards different ways of time use among the poor, it remains unclear whether the provision of public child care would actually enable the poor young mothers like those in this sample to organize their days and lives differently. Several studies from Latin America and from the OECD countries show that public provision of child care results in high take-up, but interestingly not in higher maternal labor force participation rates. Instead, what seems to happen is a substitution out of existing arrangements: those women who had their children taken care of before in informal arrangements tend to switch to formal care once available to them. In terms of economic outcomes, thus, the results are usually improved quality of labor force participation (women can 'commit' better and can take on full-time formal jobs). Thus, the demand for formal child care appears to come from women, who have already made the decision to participate in the labor market and who readjust their existing child care arrangements in favor of formal care (Mateo Díaz & Rodríguez-Chamussy, 2016).

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<sup>116</sup> This is consistent with most findings from time-use surveys which document that women tend to work overall more hours than men, particularly those who have a double burden of care work and paid work (<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/timeuse/>).

In this study, it seems like the poor mothers with pregnancy experience, who participated in the study, would not necessarily follow such labor transitions. Most of them have never worked and do not express motivation or interest in changing that. However, and this shall be discussed again towards the end of this section, the overall expansion of quality daycares may have positive benefits for the children of these mothers. Not only is early childhood education, one of the key mechanisms to avoid the development of poverty traps. In addition, the offer of child care facilities may trigger a demonstration effect: if it becomes ‘normal’ to have your child in childcare, women’s time is freed to do something else, and certainly some of the mothers would start using this additional time to do so, which may have a demonstration effect on others and change social norms.

A finding from the interviews is the shift in time use, actually a reflection of shifts in priorities. Young mothers report they cannot decide how to use their time as freely as before having a child. They almost completely give up free-time activities or hobbies. For those women are in a union, this shift often begins when they start the union (or get married), not only when they have the child (De Hoyos et al., 2016, Chioda et al., 2016). Life in general was easier, less heavy, and less burdensome, says one of the informants directly: “When I was single, my live was lighter”<sup>117</sup>. More significantly though, time use can mean more: it is a reflection of a change in priorities. Suddenly the baby shifts into the focus of all attention. Hence, the increased responsibility brings not only a lack of free time, but also a reduction in self-determination as some stated. Participant R. (poor with pregnancy experience) reflects as follows:

*Interviewer: Is that routine similar to the one of your friends, or is yours different?*

*R Yes, mine is very different. My friends tell me "let's go", I can't, I tell them, I cannot do what you do. It's not similar, well sometimes we go out, but not that I really go out with my friends, or if I go out it does not take long, like two hours. (...) It is very different now from what I was thinking before, before I only thought about going out with my friends, now no, every income that comes in is no longer for me, yes a part is for me, but I have to think about what it lacking, clothes, shoes, I cannot be selfish, I think about his health, not just in studying. (woman, P/P)*

As she says: Motherhood means an end to egoism. One cannot exclusively (and maybe not even primarily) think of oneself and one’s own goals and interests. The idea of change in priorities comes across strongly in several young poor mothers’ stories. In the same logic, others describe the limitations they experience in deciding about their own time, and how they are overall less ‘free’: someone else depends on them and they always have to think first about that other person and his/her well-being. Having a child also reduces social interactions with others, as several interviewees report. More ‘freedom’ is something one of the informants associates with the lives of her friends without children. Her friends can go out more than she can—they are freer in the way they manage their days. Others explicitly refer to having lost their adolescence.

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<sup>117</sup> In the original citation: “*Cuando yo era soltera, era más suave mi vida*”.



*Interviewer: And how was the experience of being a mom?*

*F: For me, at the time it was happiness. Likewise, it has been a happy experience; but I did not finish my adolescence. I did not finish it.*

*Interviewer: In what sense?*

*F: Well, for me I would have continued preparing myself. Things like that.*

*Interviewer: Preparing you for what?*

*F: To study my career. (woman, P / P)*

For the middle-class, the negative consequences of early childbearing seem less immediate. They emphasized support they received from their families—including paid care support—so that the child would not impact their daily lives as much. In sum, a middle-class young mother does not fully lose focus on herself. She has resources to balance the child's needs with her own.

### 10.3 Teenage motherhood: aggravated dependence, vulnerability, and the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage

As discussed before, young women—particularly, the poor—tend to depend legally, emotionally, and economically on either their parents or on a partner. When getting pregnant, they can become even more dependent from their parents if those allow them to continue living with them. The poor women share they feel they owe them something for being supportive to them. Guilt, depression, and lowered self-esteem are emotional consequences among those that did not plan their pregnancy and in particular, among single-mothers. On the other hand, another dimension of negative consequence can be observed among the women who move on to live with the father of their child. Those young women tend to become more restricted to the house and to domestic tasks, though actually this restriction is often triggered by the union, not the pregnancy. They not only become more limited in their physical mobility, but also more socially restricted. If they live with a partner, their physical mobility restriction goes hand in hand with limited economic activity and hence, economic dependence from the partner. The parental reaction of throwing their daughters out of their house makes them even more vulnerable and perpetuate their dependence. It is worth mentioning that middle-class parents in this study are not reported to throw their daughters out of the house when learning about the pregnancy. However, there are two cases among the middle-class interviewees (one with, one without pregnancy experience in adolescence) in which families suggested (with a varying degree of pressure) that their daughters get married when they found out about the pregnancy. At the same time the women have the power and liberty to negotiate the marriage to a certain extent, and they are not as dependent and subordinate to their parents' will as some of the vulnerable poor women, who sometimes physically depend on their families of origin.

Contrary to the girls, young men do not suffer from anger, expulsion, or any other severe reaction by their families. This points once more to the role of gender norms and tabooization of premarital sexual activity for girls. Also, for young men, dependence from others is much less of

an issue compared to the young women. While some claim to depend somewhat economically on their parents or the in-laws, this is a significantly less present pattern in the data. More importantly, they refer to being supported, rather than explaining how they depend on them, which are different connotations.

The middle-class mothers suggest that an early and unexpected pregnancy may have been difficult to deal with at times, but in general: life continued. Overall, the impact on the mother's well-being is much smaller among the middle-class—across every dimension mentioned above. This is due to the difference in support that can be seen. Participant G., for instance, reflects in her interview that an unplanned (teenage) pregnancy is not the end of one's life, and one can still continue the path envisioned. She says no one is condemned to be a housewife forever—one has to have the support—but one can focus on studying and taking on a career. This statement is due to the fact that the support systems of the middle-class are more functional compared to the ones of the poor. She describes her parents' support as follows:

*G: They have always gotten along well. They have never had any conflict. It is an excellent example, let's say for me. It has been the best family. Actually they are super cute, they have supported me when I got pregnant, obviously it was an emotional shock for them, because I got pregnant very young, so I think that they got overwhelmed, but all they asked me was that I continue studying, so that my life would not just remain there as a mother and that's it, but they wanted to see me well, succeed and keep going and practically forced me, well, they told me right now you betrayed us, disappointed us, but we will support you and you have to complete your studies. (woman, MC/P)*

The importance the parents put on her continuing her studies—precisely to not 'end up as a mom'—is very illustrative of that thought. In many cases, young poor women have no support systems at all available to them. As discussed before, some are completely left by themselves and alone after they get pregnant. A potential expulsion from the parents' home may push teenage mothers even deeper into vulnerability and specifically into dependence from a male (partner). At the same time, the young poor women unanimously credit their mothers (and sometimes mothers-in-law) with giving the strongest support—economically and emotionally—during pregnancy and raising the child. This has to be put further in context. In all interviews, in which this statement emerges, it comes as the answer to a direct question on: "Who supported you (most) during your pregnancy and afterwards?" or a similar question, to which young poor women respond: "my mother." However, they do not (anywhere) exemplify how, specifically. This is an important point, since it may imply that mothers were the least rejecting people. This 'support' is not filled with substantive descriptions though. In the context of overall histories of young women being left by themselves or at the hand of partners it is hard to imagine how and in which concrete forms mothers accompanied their daughters to navigate through this phase in a way that it does not affect their own potential and development, similar to what the middle-class mothers did according to the statements.

Men also mention their mothers put pressure on them to make themselves economically responsible for the child. They refer to their own mothers and the girls' mothers as the ones who were most supportive. However, these descriptions remain more generic in comparison to those of the middle-class mothers, and it is not specified what 'support' meant concretely.

The consequences of teenage motherhood, particularly among the poor as described in this chapter; the lack of investments in a mother's future; the lack of human capital accumulations; the frustration which may lead to giving up 'hope'; and the exclusion and increased dependence on others, triggered when parents refuse to support them, may likely culminate in unfavorable conditions for the children of adolescent mothers. It is well established that children from low income families fare worse off in early childhood development outcomes. Indeed, family background such as parental education, income level, and environmental factors are the strongest predictors of a child's development outcomes (Coleman Report, 1966). Children from wealthier households and those with parents who have higher education levels perform better on a variety of cognitive tests and have fewer behavioral problems than children from low-income households (Schady, 2006).<sup>118</sup> Such a relationship between socioeconomic status and early childhood development skills have also been found in Latin America (Paxson & Schady, 2007). More importantly though, the correlation between status and child development becomes stronger with age. Paxson and Schady (2007) conclude: "Moreover, the "protective" effect of wealth and parental education appears to increase with the age of the child. One compelling explanation for these patterns is that the advantages conferred by higher SES are cumulative" (p. 65).<sup>119</sup> These differences are likely due to a lack of resources among the poor but also, poor parents tend to have less education. According to Schady (2006), home environments in low income families tend to be less nurturing, mothers tend to show higher levels of depression and finally, children in low-income households also tend to have worse nutritional status.

Cognitive development status in childhood is an important predictor of wages and other development outcomes later on (see, for example: Currie & Thomas, 2000; Robertson & Symons, 2003). Importantly, non-cognitive dimensions of child development (such as patience, self-control, motivation, enthusiasm, cooperation and teamwork) have also proven to be important determinants of future success (Carneiro & Heckman, 2003; Cunha et al., 2005). Thus, a lack of investment in the early years can significantly contribute to poverty traps. "Inadequate cognitive and non-cognitive skills can therefore contribute to the transmission of poverty across generations." writes Schady (2006, p. 186). Furthermore, referring to Cunha and others (2005), Schady states: "The existence of sensitive and critical periods means that the remediation of some abilities not acquired in early childhood is impossible or prohibitively costly." (Schady, 2006, p.

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<sup>118</sup> On cognitive test results, see, for example, Blau (1999); Ruhm (2004); Taylor, Dearing, and McCartney (2004). On behavioral problems, see, for example, Berger, Paxson, and Waldfogel (2005).

<sup>119</sup> In households in the highest wealth quartile, or households where the parents have completed secondary school or more, the TVIP score of older children is higher than the corresponding score for younger children. By contrast, in other households the scores are unchanged or fall with the age of the child.

187). Conversely, early childhood development interventions have shown to be extremely effective in breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty transmission (De Hoyos et al., 2016). Specifically, the work by James Heckman has made a compelling case for early intervention to ensure learning and attachment to the education system. The Nobel laureate and other researchers have been able to provide the evidence base to show that stimulation in early childhood (up to five years of age) is of essential importance for progress later in life (Cunha & Heckman, 2007). In addition, evidence from the United States indicates the importance of early stimulation through preschool programs (Barnett, 1992; Currie, 2001). The famous Perry Preschool Project in the United States is “probably the most-studied preschool early childhood intervention in the United States” Schady (2006, p. 189). Perry Preschool Program was targeted to low-income African American children below three years of age and included classroom instruction and home visits. The overall participation time was two years per child. However, outcomes were tracked for decades to assess the effect on schooling as well as other dimensions of outcomes later in adult life. Research shows the positive outcomes of the program persist at different moments in time. Measures include educational attainment, lower grade repetition, higher rates of high school graduation, higher performance on language, and literacy tests, to name a few. Some of these impacts were lasting: at age 40, the earnings of previous participants were more than a third higher compared to the control group. Participants were also more likely to be employed and less likely to have been arrested. Interestingly, even though the participants did not achieve higher IQs after participating in the program, their test scores were higher. This shows that the main outcome of the Perry Program was its positive effect on non-cognitive skills (Heckman, 2011; Schweinhart, 2005; Currie, 2001; Carneiro & Heckman, 2003).<sup>120</sup> However, as Schady (2006) rightly notices, it may not be easy to extrapolate from findings from these rigorously evaluated model programs: As targeted small-scale interventions they are likely run by more motivated and better trained staff compared to large-scale programs. Furthermore, the sample size of the evaluations may be relatively small. However, evaluations of the large-scale preschool program Head Start program (created in 1965, in 1999 it covered 800,000 children) also found very positive effects. Studies found that participants in Head Start are less likely to be enrolled in special education when reaching school, more likely to make adequate grade progress, and less likely to drop out of high school. Long term benefits include lower rates of delinquency and higher rates of college attendance (Currie & Thomas, 1995).

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are those who benefit most from exposure to quality early childhood development interventions, both in short-term improvements as well as in longer-term improvements (Heckman, 2011). Heckman (2011) makes a strong case for investing in the most disadvantaged children and their families: “It comes as no surprise that there are significant differences in family environments and the resources invested in children across

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<sup>120</sup> Relatedly, Currie (2001) shows that participants in the Carolina Abecedarian Project, a center-based child care intervention emphasizing language development, had higher scores on achievement tests and lower incidence of grade retention at age 15.

socioeconomic groups. Gaps in cognitive and emotional stimulation for children from families of different socioeconomic status open up early. Family status makes a substantial difference.” (Heckman, 2011, p. 32). Children who are facing a multitude of risk factors in their families and their social environments face the highest risks of educational disattachment. For instance, single-parent households may not provide the same nurturing environments than ‘intact’ families: “Intact families invest greater amounts in their children than do single-parent families although the exact reasons why are not known.” (Heckman, 2001, p. 33). This statement refers both to cognitive stimulation and emotional support, both of which have been shown to strongly influence adult outcomes. Here, the urge for early intervention becomes even stronger. High quality childcare has the potential to reduce the effects of social disadvantage, and to prepare children for a successful transition to formal schooling (Schweinhart et al., 2005). At the same time, early childhood development interventions through institutions may not be enough since child care effects are mediated by family background. While, as mentioned before, poverty works as a strong predictor of negative outcomes later in life, recent research suggests that “good parenting is more important than cash” (Heckman, 2011, p. 33). As Heckman shows (2011), direct investments in children complemented with investments in the mother and the family environment together are promising to improve the child’s outcomes: “Improvements in both are the wisest investment.” (Heckman, 2011, p. 35).

Another option to more effectively reach out to and address the needs of children born to poor adolescent mothers can be dedicated home visit programs. Home visiting programs send trained staff into homes of families to encourage positive changes in parenting practices. In a systematic review of home visiting programs (Peacock et al., 2013), the authors find substantive improvements in the development and health of young children: These include developmental benefits in relation to problem behaviors, reduced incidence of low birth weights and reduced health problems in older children among others. At the same time, overall home-visiting programs were limited in improving the lives of socially high-risk children particularly in disadvantaged families. For Jamaica, Grantham-Mc-Gregor et al. (1991) evaluated an intervention that combined stimulation (weekly home visits by social workers focusing on improved parenting) and the provision of nutritional supplements. The largest positive effects were found among the group that were exposed to both interventions.<sup>121</sup> Another example of a successful program to support young mothers, helping them to focus on the development of their children, is the Early Excellence Centers in the United Kingdom. Here, the “structure” provided by having the mothers create diaries for their children ended up nurturing other dimensions of the women’s lives (Bertram et al., 2004). Such programs actually address the development of both mothers and children and deconstruct dependency mechanisms.

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<sup>121</sup> However, a review of six program impact evaluations (Gomby, Culross, and Behrman 1999) is largely disappointing – probably due to high attrition in these programs (the authors hypothesize that these programs seek to convince participants to change behaviors the participants may not view as negative themselves).

## 10.4 Discussion

As discussed, a few studies, find that the negative outcomes attributed to teenage pregnancy disappear or are reduced when appropriate controls are put in place for the preexisting family and socioeconomic characteristics of teen mothers (Geronimus and Korenman, 1992). For Latin America and the Caribbean, these findings are also sustained in Azevedo et al. (2012). Similarly, a review by Greene and Merrick (2005) demonstrates that prior conclusions about the substantive impact of adolescent childbirth soon evolved into a more nuanced understanding once research incorporated more adequate controls for socioeconomic background. The same study has found though that children of adolescent mothers are more likely to have grown up in poor or dangerous environments, become vulnerable to health risks and abuse, struggle in school, and experience incarceration (Greene & Merrick, 2005). What emerges is that teenage pregnancy is associated with poverty, lack of quality education, and lack of economic opportunities.

I am arguing here though that teenage pregnancy is more than just a source of negative outcomes as often discussed in the literature: First, it is a manifestation of a combination of unfavorable circumstances (poverty, absence of opportunities, and restrictive traditional gender norms), and thus, an expression of multiple deprivations. In that sense, the factors that seem to drive it and contribute to it are negative in and of themselves. Second, teenage motherhood can unfold in ways that impact the ongoing identity development of young poor women—in ways that will likely have long-lasting consequences for their own identity as well as for the future of their children. Fathers also play an important role here. If fathers stay and engage, they often invest their time in earning an income instead of studying more (which beyond mere educational achievements can have impacts on their earnings, job security, and economic outcomes). With regards to mothers: a (poor) adolescent mother who has a child is likely not focusing on her own individual development, building a career, and completing education. Thus, both father and mother may stop investing in their own human capital endowments and identity development as a consequence of early pregnancy (while importantly, that consequence is not equally automatic among men as discussed). De Hoyos et al. (2016) have shown that youths' time allocation today can have long-lasting—even permanent—effects, such as poorer labor market outcomes in the future: “Because of the immutable endowments received by youth, there is substantial intergenerational transmission of well-being—and, conversely, of poverty” (De Hoyos et al., 2016). As seen in this chapter: without significant support, young poor women will not be able to continue using their time in ways that constitute a focus on their own future (such as capacity building, education, social exposure to others, hobbies, etc.). They will not be able to focus on their own identity development. This may trigger a series of disadvantages later, including psychosocial effects and lowered self-esteem but also fewer economic opportunities, lower earnings, and, increased dependence on a future partner. And it may have severe impacts on their children if not supported adequately.

## 11 Conclusions

Teenage pregnancy has internationally been conceived as a problem. The negative consequences from early childbearing have been broadly documented and the relevance of the phenomenon reflected in numerous projects, programs, and government policies. First, there is evidence on the associations of teenage pregnancy with reduced educational, economic, and social outcomes of the mother and the child. Second, teenage motherhood is seen as an expression and outcome of young women's lack of empowerment. Given these concerns, it is important to understand the decisions of young women and their partners around pregnancy as well as to analyze the decision-making process and context in which these decisions are being made to be able to effectively tackle the issue.

While teenage fertility rates are declining worldwide, Latin America has shown a remarkably slow pace of decline compared to other regions, which led to the region now being second among all world regions, only showing lower rates than Sub-Saharan Africa. The region's adolescent fertility rate is high if compared with countries of similar characteristics (given its GDP and education levels), and it is also higher given the region's total fertility rate, its unemployment rate, female labor participation rate, and its public health expenditures as a share of GDP (see Azevedo, 2012). The only macro level indicator according to which the region is not an outlier in terms of teenage pregnancy is inequality. Another fact about teenage pregnancy in Latin America compared to other regions is that here, one finds the largest wealth disparity in adolescent birth rates: adolescents in the poorest 20 percent of households are almost five times as likely (4.8) to give birth as those in the richest 20 percent (UNFPA, 2013). More concerning, though, rates have dropped significantly for the richest quintile, which is not true for the poorest, thus indicating a trend towards an increasing gap between these groups. Beyond those correlations of teenage pregnancy rates with macro-level indicators, one point worth emphasizing, but difficult to measure, is the role of norms (gender norms and norms around female sexuality) in the region. The ideal of the Latin American woman, following the role model of Virgin Mary<sup>122</sup>, shapes the aspirations of many young women and has strong implications on sexual and reproductive decision-making, behavior, and overall life decisions as discussed earlier.

This research turned to a specific case study in Latin America: its focus is on urban Nicaragua. In Nicaragua, teenage pregnancy is strongly associated with lower levels of education, lower income, and rural location of residence, similar to what has been found in other countries in Latin America. Nicaragua continues to have the second highest teenage pregnancy rate in the region. Beyond the high teenage pregnancy rates, Nicaragua is also interesting to study because of its particular political, social, and historical characteristics.

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<sup>122</sup> Note the earlier mentioned essay by Evelyn Stevens in 1977 on 'marianismo' in Latin America as being the 'other' side of machismo in the region.

The revolution and the socio-political changes induced by it are still very present in Nicaragua. The FSLN (Sandinista) victory in the late 70s was accompanied by people's hopes for the elimination of poverty and inequality and the promotion of women's rights. Several early initiatives of the Sandinista government seemed to move these hopes towards reality, but the Contra War profoundly weakened the government and undermined its efforts in several policy dimensions. Ultimately, the FSLN lost the 1990 elections. In 2006, the FSLN was reelected. However, fractions of the women's movement distanced themselves from the FSLN after the party supported the changes to more restrictive abortion legislation in the country.

Today, Nicaragua presents a contradictory picture when it comes to gender equality outcomes, as portrayed earlier. On one hand, the country has made significant progress on several dimensions of its legal and institutional framework, as well as in some specific dimensions of gender equality where the country figures among the region's top performers (such as political representation). On the other hand, it is significantly lagging behind in other dimensions of gender equality (such as labor outcomes for women, violence against women, and precisely, teenage pregnancy). Finally, there seem to be two significant streams of influence on gender roles and stereotypes, pushing into somewhat opposite directions: the Sandinista revolution in 1979 and the subsequent promotion of new roles for women, on the one hand; and the dominant presence of religious institutions (Catholic and Evangelic churches) and their influence on issues related to sexual and reproductive rights, on the other hand.

## 11.1 Discussion of main findings

Based on a review of the existing literature, the main purpose of this research was to explore the decision-making process around teenage motherhood in urban Nicaragua. The study was focused on an in-depth exploration of the decision-making of young women and men on fertility with qualitative methods. Key informant interviews were conducted at two moments: prior to starting the fieldwork, and then, once a preliminary analysis had been completed, to validate and help interpret findings. Five different groups of informants were recruited in Managua and in Ciudad Sandino.

- Poor young women with a pregnancy experience in adolescence
- Poor young women without a pregnancy experience in adolescence
- Middle-class young women with a pregnancy experience in adolescence
- Middle-class young women without a pregnancy experience in adolescence
- Men who father children born to adolescent mothers (poor)

In-depth individual interviews were conducted with all of these groups.

With regard to young women interviewed for this study, I find three types of decision-makers across the two income level groups—those who planned their pregnancy, those who did not plan



and did not avoid either, and finally those who took successful measures to postpone their pregnancy.

Table 7: Decision-types across interviewed groups

Decision-type	Poor with pregnancy experience	Poor no pregnancy experience in adolescence	Middle-class with pregnancy experience	Middle-class no pregnancy experience
Planned pregnancy	Significant presence	None	None	None
Did not plan pregnancy but did not actively avoid it; letting it happen	Significant presence	Significant presence	All	None
Postponed pregnancy	None	Some presence	None	All

Those who planned their pregnancy (notably only present among the poor) list a range of driving motivations, one of the most prominent ones being the ‘feeling ready,’ which Burton (1996) in a related study refers to as “accelerated life course” among the poor. Moreover, some find the idea of being an ‘old’ mother unattractive because they believe it is riskier and that older mothers are more disconnected from their children’s realities. Other motives include the wish to formalize a union; hence, early unions were revealed to be strong drivers of pregnancy. Childbearing is also often a planned objective as a way to be loved and to overcome social isolation. Finally, in some cases young women state that their planning of the pregnancy was a result of the partner’s pushing for it.

The group of those who do not exercise control and let pregnancy happen is a particularly interesting one, given the ambivalence expressed among many interviewees. This type of decision-making appears among three of the four targeted groups of women (with the exception of middle-class without pregnancy experience). At the same time, there is quite a large spectrum of possible explanations as to why the respective young women do not exercise control, ranging from absence of control in their partnership to indifference regarding the pregnancy outcome. One cannot note some nuances when comparing i) poor with pregnancy experience, ii) poor without pregnancy experience, and iii) middle-class with pregnancy experience. Regarding the poor with pregnancy experience, the predominant pattern is the absence of a strong opposition towards pregnancy and an overly passive attitude towards pregnancy. Some of the most vulnerable also cannot make decisions in their couple due gendered power relations as discussed. A significant share of those recruited for the group of poor without pregnancy experience actually had a child soon after they completed 19 years of age, the age cutoff for teenage pregnancy. Interestingly, several of these young women state they have not been consistent in their contraceptive use even before having the child. Many of the mothers in this group also describe their pregnancies after age 19 similarly to the poor teenage mothers: it happened without much planning or control. Finally, there are the middle-class mothers who describe their pregnancies as unwanted

‘accidents.’ They did not take action to prevent the pregnancies either. Certain arguments explaining the background of the pregnancy do overlap between the different groups (tabooization of sex which leads to lack of conscious preparation, not considering the risk of getting pregnant to be a real one, etc.). However, the lack of action of the middle-class is never related to indifference regarding a pregnancy, while that is the most common explanation among the poor. Only few of the poor without pregnancy experience claim they actively take measures to postpone a pregnancy. Overall, the majority in this group does not express a strong decision against pregnancy, nor are they taking clear actions. The poor without pregnancy experience did not significantly postpone pregnancy after age 19, and, in fact, a significant share of this group already had a child at the moment of the interview (and after 19). Furthermore, only a minority in this group said they would postpone having a baby until age 25 or older. The active postponing of pregnancy was not a very common strategy among the poor without pregnancy experience or among those who already had had a child. Contrary to that, all middle-class women without pregnancy experience are explicit regarding their strategies to postpone a pregnancy. Their arguments essentially focus around “not feeling ready” and not yet feeling “realized.” They specify a few things they felt they needed to accomplish before childbearing.

Abortion was mentioned in a few cases (both poor and middle-class) as an option they had considered for a moment, but then decided to abstain from given their conscience and fear of feeling guilty afterwards. Some did not pursue abortion because they were facing open resistance by family members or partners, who threatened them with legal consequences at times.

One of the most important results related to this typology is that the type of decisions, their motivations, and the main constraints young women face, the way they implement those, the factors that help them to effectively do so, and the factors that prevent them from taking action—all of these differ more strongly between poor and middle-class than within income groups when comparing those with and without pregnancy experience.

## 11.2 What is behind those findings?

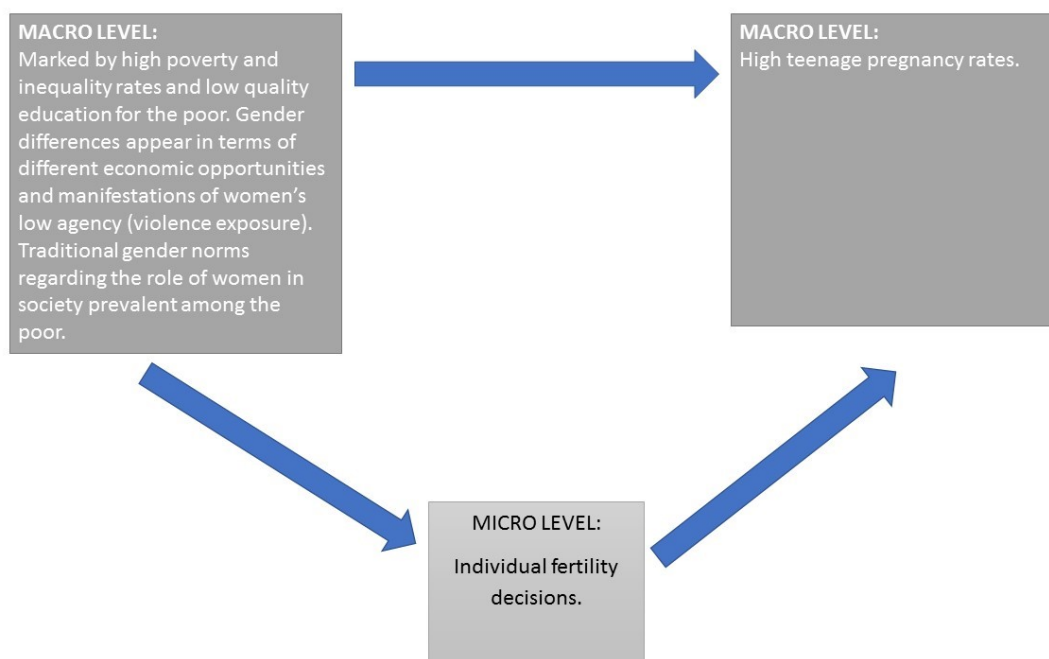
One of the most important findings of this research is that there are two structural dimensions of constraints that influence the ways the young women can decide and do decide whether and when to become a mother. These constraints can be grouped in two dimensions:

- a) Limitations related to *poverty and lack of opportunities available* for poor women: lack of quality education, lack of effective and timely access to health and reproductive services, constraints to their mobility and lack of exposure to different realities, violence and crime in their neighborhoods, absence of good quality opportunities in the labor market, absence of and role models around them.
- b) Limitations related to *gender roles*, the daily experience of how these unfold among their peers and family, internalization of the roles and the way that they play out in young women’s day to day lives, relationships and decisions.

While all groups are affected by one or both of these dimensions of limitations to varying extent, both groups of poor women (pregnant and not pregnant) are affected by both limitations at the same time. Contrary to that, the middle-class women (both pregnant and not pregnant) are not affected by the lack of opportunities and poverty. In addition, the middle-class while definitely affected by restrictive gender roles and stereotypes to some extent, are significantly less affected by that dimension of limitations if compared to the poor.

The following graph illustrates the research findings using the Coleman bathtub model introduced in the Introduction and in Chapter 5. At the macro level, high poverty levels and low-quality opportunities, combined with traditional gender norms prescribing women's role as in the household and as mothers (and reflected in gender related indicators suggesting limited economic opportunities for women), are important observable characteristics at the macro level in Nicaragua, as discussed. Moreover, and still at the macro level, one observes very high levels of adolescent fertility, in fact, the second highest in the Latin America and Caribbean region. While there is no causal relationship between these social phenomena observed at the macro level (as may potentially be implied in the figure), the qualitative data sheds light on how the first set of macro-level phenomena impact the individual woman's decisions and actions.

Figure 26: Adaptation of the 'Coleman bathtub' for this research



Translating Coleman's theory to the context of this research, one notices that poverty and gender norms seem to provide the guiding framing principles for the poor to make decisions regarding their future including when and how to form a family. The individual decisions and actions may then accumulate again at the macro level as reflected in high adolescent fertility rates. Contrary to that, young women from middle-class families are exposed to a different context (marked by the absence of deprivations and by less traditional gender norms). The way in which they make

decisions about their future (including about the formation of families) is consequently different from the decisions made by the poor and so are the actions both groups take to implement those decisions.

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the macro conditions in place in Nicaragua. Not only is the context marked by comparably high poverty and inequality levels. In addition, one can observe an increase in access to education, however, the quality of education remains an issue of concern. Women's status in the country is ambiguous with some dimensions of gender equality showing very positive outcomes, while the country is lagging behind the region in other indicators of gender equality. Women's economic opportunities and their exposure to intimate partner violence are particularly concerning while the country ranks among the leaders in Latin America in terms of women's political participation. Furthermore, norms around women's role in society are also somewhat contradictory with the heritage from the revolution promoting women's active citizenship and presence in the public sphere while the still quite prevalent traditional roles envision women as mothers and caregivers.

Following Coleman, these macro conditions provide the context under which individuals make decisions at the micro level. The following paragraphs illustrate how the macro context is channeled in those individual decisions, grouping the characteristics at the macro level into poverty/ deprivation and gender norms.

First, poverty and deprivation are not the only constraints that poor women are facing—they also face more severely limiting gender norms. Gender norms severely limit the agency of poor women. As discussed in the respective chapters, restrictive gender norms have a constraining effect on how young women manage their sexuality, but also on the ways they see themselves, imagine and plan their future, and foresee their role in their families, communities, and society.

Gender norms affect sexual relations and they affect access to information and contraceptives. The sexual behavior of the young poor women is shaped by gender norms that often prescribe the role of women to be passive, obedient, and asexual which can lead to a lack of control over sex. Relatedly, sex is socially considered to be only acceptable for women married or in unions, which is pushing several young women into early marriages to protect their relationships with their families and their role in their communities (and often, their own conscience and values). Sexual and reproductive health services often focus on providing access to information and to contraception to prevent unwanted teenage pregnancies. Undebatably, those are important factors: access to quality information and effective access to contraception are necessary preconditions that need to be in place to ensure young women can exercise control over their sexuality. At the same time, effective access to contraception and control over its usage is constrained by tabooization of women's sexuality (and pre-marital sex in particular), as well as power relations in the couple that don't always women to make effective use of contraceptives.

Gender norms also imply that women be passive and obedient to their partners and families, hence they do not seem to have equal decision-making capacity within relationships. This becomes true when analyzing the ways couples decide on whether or not and which types of contraceptives to use as mentioned earlier, but also do these patterns become evident in general life decisions and in the way women can or cannot participate in those.

Building on the empirical evidence on how social norms matter for teenage pregnancy, the collected data shows how social gender norms determine the way women see their roles in families and society. Starting at a very early age, poor girls grow up to become caregivers, restricted to the private sphere and with less potential to exercise power in their families and communities compared to boys. The young women describe their own experiences of transitioning into adulthood by becoming a wife and/or a mother. According to their statements, this way of transitioning into adulthood is shared by other women they are exposed to, including close role models or family members who also become adults by their status of motherhood and not through economic independence from their parental home, for instance. Besides the exposure to peers and family members, religion and religious norms impact the identity formation of young women. Christian (both Catholic and Evangelical) values and norms promoted in the communities observed often consist in a dichotomy of gender constructs, affirming a strongly domestic and mother-focused role for women. The good (domestic) mother is contrasted by the providing (working) father. This emphasis placed on the primary role of women as mothers and hence on family formation is also evidenced in the high and persistent prevalence of child marriage in Nicaragua more broadly (and in this sample specifically).

The norms young women learn around their role in families, communities, and society, have implications for their choices and decisions along the way to adulthood. A specific illustration of that argument is related to young women leaving difficult contexts in their families of origin: Poor young women are consciously looking for exit options when in difficult (sometimes violent) situations at home. In their perception, finding a man to form a union with is the main way to transition to adulthood and become independent from their parental home. Wanting to leave those conditions they see no alternative ways to transition into adulthood other than moving from dependence from their parents to dependence from a partner.

The lack of taking action over their fertility as evident among those women who do not actively make a decision for or against motherhood is consistent with the lack of control over their lives in a broader sense. These young women do not exercise agency in almost any dimension of their lives, and planning their families being one of them. Life happens to them, their outlook is rather passive, and pregnancy is just one more dimension over which they do not exercise control. They are not used to being in command in any of the other life dimensions either—related to the fact that they are children/adolescents, but also related to their condition as women in contexts where most decision-making, voice, and power are largely attributed to males.

While the difference in exposure to constraining gender norms when comparing poor and middle-class could be particular to this sample (see discussion under the limitations section in Chapter 2), differences between income quintile groups in perceptions and attitudes towards gender equality can be validated throughout Latin America with perception survey data from the World Values Surveys/Latinobarometro (Chioda, 2016). Hence, the middle-class women are only affected by one set of constraints, instead of two. In addition, they are exposed to it less severely if compared to the poor.

In addition to gender norms, poverty and a lack of opportunities build the second dimension of structural factors that pose constraints to the identity formation of poor young women. As mentioned several times, the most significant differences in decision-making were found when comparing socio-economic groups—not when comparing groups with or without pregnancy experience.

The motivations behind planned motherhood speak very clearly to this argument of an absence of other opportunities. The girls' motivation to have a child arises just after (or even before) finishing secondary school, pointing to the fact that there is an absence of competing objectives or opportunities. This distinguishes them significantly from the middle-class. Middle-class women have access to opportunities, aspirations, objectives, and support systems that help shape their aspirational goals and that provide tools and support to achieve them.

One of the results of the study is that the poor are also faced with less functional immediate support systems. Family dynamics differ significantly when comparing poor with non-poor families. Families tended to be more disrupted and not providing the same level of support to young women among the poor. Migration is very common—the fathers often leave, sometimes the mothers do as well, in which case their children often stay with grandmothers (or in few cases other family members). Growing up with the grandmothers or other family members has implications for the connections these young women felt to their families of origin. To some extent a missing sense of belonging is quite present among many of the interviewees. Also, grandmothers often bring even more traditional views on women's role in society and transfer those to the young women they are raising. Another prevalent observation from the interviews with poor women is that in the absence of fathers, mothers tend to engage in relationships with new partners. The presence of other male figures in the household is not always positively described by the young women, and there are a few cases that relate sexual abuse with a lack of support by the mother. These factors strongly differ between poor and not poor (and not so much between those with or without pregnancy experience), setting different conditions for identity formation.

Regarding opportunities, the two groups have very different experiences related to education. Not only do the experiences in school differ when comparing the poor with the middle-class (who generally have more positive things to share about their schooling), but so do the perceptions of the value of education and the aspirations to pursue further education

opportunities. In the perceptions of most of the poor education is not linked to a better life or to a better job—it does not have clear instrumental value. While some finish secondary school before having a baby, others slowly transition out of school, and when inquiring more deeply, one realizes they never were strongly attached to school. For most of the poor, further education opportunities are not available, at least not according to their perceptions. For several interviewees, studying beyond secondary does not feel like an option. Moreover, since there are no ‘good’ jobs available for the poor, more education would not put them in an advantageous position to qualify for those.

Middle-class women in contrast put strong emphasis on educational achievements, on having not merely a ‘job,’ but a career instead. Moreover, there are strong references to the concept of independence, on taking control over one’s destiny and being able to lead a life, according to one’s own will. These are strong references to the concept of agency, and not present in a comparable way among the poor.

As seen throughout the previous chapters, the structural conditions matter not only for individual outcomes, but they also influence the ways in which they shape their aspirations, and how, potentially, they adapt their preferences (see Chapter 5). Young women from different groups express different aspirations, and their life stories illustrate how and why those differences may arise and what the factors are that may have influenced them to go in different directions. While the middle-class aspires to better jobs, careers, studying abroad, the poor women’s aspirations are framed around family formation. They emphasize their role as caring for others—sacrificing their own objectives for the sake of others. If there are no developmental steps young women perceive are important to achieve before having a child, or after finishing secondary school, they do not see the necessity to postpone a pregnancy further. On the other hand, in the world of the middle-class young women—being surrounded by other women (and men) who do participate in tertiary education and pursue careers—a pregnancy before achieving these other objectives in their lives would be irrational.

Those conditions lead to individual decisions that differ profoundly when comparing the poor and the middle-class, reflecting the different exposure of these groups to the macro conditions grouped in poverty/deprivation and gender norms. The macro conditions in place in Nicaragua influence both differences in women’s agency (process freedom) and differences in their achievement of capabilities (see earlier discussion of these concepts developed by Amartya Sen). This is not trivial, since it shows how poverty, deprivation, and traditional gender norms operate to undermine both: agency and capabilities. This explains why the three different types of decision-making processes introduced earlier differ so strongly by socio-economic group. In summary, the imminent context for the poor in Nicaragua is marked by low job prospects and low-quality education for a vast share of the population. In addition, gender norms are diverging strongly when comparing different groups of the population. The influence of the revolution and its promise to further equality between the sexes, promoting progressive roles for women as decision-makers and combatants seem to have left its trace, but predominantly among the well-

educated middle-class. This group lives the change in values and norms, as emphasized strongly in the interviews with this group. On the other hand though, the poor are exposed to continuously strong values placed on motherhood, virginity, and roles put forward by religious institutions. At the individual level, these differences—in access to opportunities, norms, and values—influence the incentives structure and the outcomes achieved by the various segments of the population. Additionally, they influence the process of decision making.

Together, gender norms and poverty constrain the ways that young poor women can experiment and develop their identities. This has long-term consequences for their human capital accumulation and well-being more generally. The findings in the previous chapters show that it is structural factors of disadvantage and exclusion that keep young poor women from agentically taking control over their life projects, which contrasts to poor men and also to middle-class women. I show that the constraining mechanisms that keep poor women from developing their identities in the same way as middle-class women are structural factors related to social norms that prescribe certain (limited) roles to women and, in addition, poverty, social exclusion and isolation, bad quality education, a lack of job opportunities. Consequently, the findings undermine positions that may suggest that agency is an attribute inherent (or not) to the individual without acknowledging the relevance of structural factors that influence whether or not agency can be nurtured as an attribute or not (see Bourdieu, 1977).

Not only are the middle-class women not exposed to deprivation and poverty, but they are also not exposed to similarly constraining gender norms. Consistent with other research, this analysis illustrates that the important changes in attitudes regarding the role of women in society, which was triggered by the revolution in the 1970s, did not reach all segments of the population in the same ways. The revolution accelerated the transition process to less traditional forms of thinking and seeing the world according to literature and key informant interviews – but only for some groups. Today, Nicaraguan society seems fragmented in terms of attitudes towards women's roles in society.

The analysis shows strong difference with regard to the agency that each of the groups are able to exercise. Agency, aspirations, and identity formation vary to a large extent based on whether or not young women are exposed to one or both of these limiting dimensions and by how intensely they are affected by the respective dimension. Both types of constraints pose challenges on how young women form their identity and imagine and plan their lives. Following the typology, the most striking differences in terms of identity formation are seen when comparing socio-economic groups, as there seems to be little difference between women from the same socio-economic group with or without pregnancy experience.

That said, lower agency has implications for the individuals' potential to achieve better outcomes for their lives. If poor women lack the capacity to make decisions and the capacity to translate those decisions into actions, if they do not have control over the course of their destiny, they will likely not prosper as their middle-class peers, who show this capacity. As discussed before, Sen's



capability approach combines a focus on outcomes with a focus on process. In the cases analyzed here, poor women are not only deprived of achieved capabilities, but they also have lower chances to exercise process freedom (agency).

And finally, going back to Coleman's bathtub, it becomes evident that the individual decisions as described in this section accumulate in outcomes also observed at the macro level: high adolescent fertility rates, particularly among the poor population.

### 11.3 And the result? Inequality and a gendered poverty trap

Beyond the findings put forward in this research which are related to the individual well-being and outcomes of the mothers and of their children (building on existing literature in the latter case), I would now like to discuss how the analysis is relevant from a development perspective more broadly. As illustrated with the help of the Coleman's bathtub: the individual poor and non-poor women (based on the macro conditions they are exposed to) do not only make decisions that are relevant for their own and the future of their children. Those individual decisions do accumulate at the macro level reflecting not only large discrepancies in teenage pregnancy rates when comparing different groups, but they may actually contribute to persisting inequality more broadly.

Teenage pregnancy has implications for the further identity development of the young mothers. The findings on negative consequences of early childbearing as discussed in the last chapter, particularly the one related to the primary focus of adolescent mothers not being on themselves, their own objectives, and well-being anymore, is an important one since it insinuates the serious risk of a persistence of poverty as a potential result of teenage pregnancy. In line with the capability approach, teenage pregnancy not only deprives individual (poor) women from important capabilities, it deprives them from the opportunity to achieve capabilities going forward in their lives (given their increased vulnerabilities, dependence, and their restriction to domestic unpaid tasks, as discussed). Hence, it deprives them from exercising agency over their bodies, lives, and future.

Beyond the deeper understanding of how concretely young women from different socio-economic groups make decisions with regards to their fertility, what may limit their capacity to do so, and what may put constraints on the outcomes, this research illustrates some interesting aspects that go beyond the micro level. The study contributes to some understanding of the mechanisms behind the chronicity of poverty and the reproduction of inequality.

The present study contributes to the discussion of intergenerational transmission of poverty by disentangling some of the mechanisms behind that process. First of all, teenage mothers are more likely to be daughters of teenage mothers themselves. As seen earlier, the multitude of negative consequences of teenage motherhood on their own development, the lack of investments in their own future, the lack of human capital accumulations, the frustration which may lead to giving up

‘hope’, the exclusion and increased dependence on others, triggered when parents refuse to support them, may likely culminate in unfavorable conditions for the children of adolescent mothers. The children of teenage mothers grow up in environments that are likely less conducive to moving them out of poverty if their mothers have low chances of achieving capabilities and exercising agency. The respective chapter summarizes the evidence that indicates that children from low-income families fare worse off in early childhood development outcomes. Moreover, there is strong evidence that human capital outcomes of young people affect those of their children (children of better educated parents tend to be healthier, better educated, etc.) and thus, effects of intergenerational mobility out of poverty should not be neglected (World Bank, 2007). The processes as observed in the previous chapters indicate that both – absolute and relative intergenerational mobility will likely be hampered.

Moreover though, experiencing teenage pregnancy in poverty can turn into poverty traps. The concept of a ‘poverty trap’ is related to that of capabilities, as developed by Amartya Sen and discussed before. Poverty deprives individuals of central capabilities, which in itself then will limit the individual’s ability to achieve goals. If a young girl does not invest in her education anymore because she is a mother now and being a mother means one should not attend full-time schooling (but at maximum a weekend class), this is concerning because the investment in education pays off in multiple ways, as discussed earlier. Similarly, if a young mother focuses primarily on the well-being of her child and does not have time and energy to think of herself, plan for herself, and grow for herself, this is equally concerning.

Esther Duflo has contributed to the literature on poverty traps, particularly in the Tanner lectures (Duflo, 2012). She brings to attention the importance of ‘hope.’ According to her, a deficit of hope can be the source of a poverty trap, and, conversely, hope can fuel an exit from the poverty trap.<sup>123</sup> The young (poor) women in this study lack the ‘hope’ that out of their own strength and capacity they can influence a change in their fate. This is reflected in their giving up from own educational or job-related goals. Even more so, their mental state is often very negative—they lack self-esteem and a belief in themselves, and they often feel guilty for the unplanned pregnancy. Consequently, their self-esteem is comparably low. Moreover, and as discussed before, the ‘burden’ of responsibility related to bringing up a child feels overwhelming to most of them. It is hard to imagine many of those that were interviewed would come up with the energy and drive to take on challenges and tackle them. Finally, they lack the examples and ‘capacity to aspire,’ to imagine which tools and steps they may have to take to successfully do so. Furthermore, the anticipations or expectations of what is ‘achievable’ may itself determine behavior and outcomes (Appadurai, 2004) and thus, deepen poverty traps. If transformation and change for the better

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<sup>123</sup> But importantly, not only the outcomes of decisions are influenced by hope. Duflo also refers to the impact of hope on decision-making ability. She states that poverty can affect the capacity to make a decision in and of itself. Relatedly, Duflo quotes Haushofer (2012) on the correlation between income and a particular symptom of depression (using data from the World Values Survey). According to this research, there is a correlation between income and the feeling that life is meaningless as well as locus of control (which means people believe they can or cannot shape their own fates). This correlation seems to hold both within and across countries.

are not part of the imaginary framework of a person, that person's willingness or ability to try his or her very best in life may be hampered. Duflo explains that a lack of hope can cause an individual to deliberately "hold back," thus reducing the ability to realize his or her full potential. In addition to the negative impacts teenage pregnancy may have on the mothers, the investments in her future and the way she imagines herself in the future, poverty traps may also be triggered through the effects of teenage pregnancy on the children of adolescent girls. There is a solid body of evidence showing how parental aspirations influence the achievement of their children (Sacerdote, 2011).

Potentially even more important though: Besides a deepened understanding of the drivers behind the intergenerational transmission of poverty, the study sheds light on teenage pregnancy as a phenomenon which leads to the reproduction of inequality. The differences in the conditions under which young women from different socio-economic backgrounds can exercise agency (process freedom) and achieve capabilities (outcomes) and the persistence of structures that contribute to these differences show a strong persistence of inequality among different groups of the population in Nicaragua. The middle-class women share values, norms, and aspirations (and opportunities) very much alike to those of (many) well-educated middle-class women in high income countries. The poor women, on the contrary, share more traditional gender norms, often have less supportive environments, have access to fewer (and lower quality) opportunities and to a large extent, adapt their aspirations and preferences accordingly. This goes back to an argument mentioned before, which relates to the fact that the social distance between different groups of the population, isolating the poor from the realities of the middle-class makes their world, values, aspirations, and opportunities unattainable for the poor and locks these groups into segregated realities, inhibiting social mobility (Ray, 2006). The process of modernization and globalization has different effects on these different groups.

There is, however, a second element to mention here which is particularly concerning in the context of this study: the lower chances of exercising agency and of accumulating capabilities among the poor will be reflected in increasing or perpetuated inequality at the macro level. Unless these cycles will be effectively addressed, women from poor backgrounds will continue to have children earlier and will continue to exercise little agency in the process of deciding whether or not and when to have a child. Their children will grow up with female role models who exercised little agency in shaping their own fate and placed a primary emphasis on becoming a mother as a way to transition into adulthood, and they will likely grow up in poverty.

The contexts the two distinct groups are exposed to will likely keep the poor poor and ensure the middle-class children will have access to different opportunities with their parents being better positioned to provide them with dedicated support throughout their pathways. Privilege as well as poverty will likely persist if the processes observed in this research are not effectively addressed. So, summarizing, if these patterns as observed in the previous chapters hold, then "the various dimensions of inequality (in wealth, power, and social status) interact to protect the

rich from downward mobility and to prevent the poor from being upwardly mobile” (Rao, 2006, p. 11).

The fact that globally inequality persists despite substantial progress and economic growth has been an issue widely discussed in the media and among economists and other experts in the field.<sup>124</sup> Several quite illustrative metaphors have been used prominently to underline different positions in the controversy of whether globalization closes or widens equity gaps. For instance, President J.F. Kennedy said “A rising tide lifts all boats” in a speech delivered in Colorado on August 17, 1962, (after congressional approval of a giant dam project (see Sperling, 2005)). Behind it was the assumption that economic prosperity will automatically lift all members of an economy, including the poor. In 2005, New York Times columnist Friedman published a controversial book “The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century,” which analyzes globalization and the status of it at the beginning of the 21st century. The title clearly insinuates the author’s position according to which globalization has turned the world into a leveled playing field. However, there is controversy around such statements: Nobel prize winner Joseph Stiglitz criticized the book (and the metaphor it spreads) openly: “Not only is the world not flat: in many ways, it has been getting less flat” (Stiglitz, 2006, p. 56). Along similar lines, Nancy Birdsall (President of the Center for Global Development) titled a 2005 lecture at the World Institute for Development Economist Research as a direct response to the metaphor: “The World is not Flat: Inequality and Injustice in our Global Economy”<sup>125</sup> in which she emphasizes that global inequality poses significant problems to societies, making it a challenge to manage globalization in a way that it benefits all. She argues that the world is “full of craters” in which poor people and poor countries are stuck, highlighting not only the inequality between countries but also, within countries.

Inequality as a potential downside of globalization has gotten significant traction also within international organizations. The concern of equity is reflected in the 2013 adoption of two goals by the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank: end global extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity—the latter measured as the growth in the average income or consumption of the bottom 40 percent of a country’s population. Similarly, the United Nations’ SDG Goal 10 aims to “progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average” by 2030 (target 10.1).<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Often, this discussion has been framed within the context of questioning whether and how globalization may contribute to reductions in inequality – or actually widen income gaps globally. Neo-classical growth theory suggests that in the mid and certainly the long run, incomes across different countries will converge. On the other hand, more skeptical perspectives, raised in the context of the dependency theory, suggest that the richer countries will benefit more from globalization if compared to their poorer peers as the first will be ‘exploited’ under open market conditions (MacDonald and Majeed, 2010).

<sup>125</sup> <https://www.cgdev.org/article/world-not-flat-inequality-and-injustice-our-global-economy>

<sup>126</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10>

One central question when discussing the issue of global inequality relates to the term itself: Inequality of what? Do we refer to inequality in outcomes or inequality of opportunity? Interestingly though, the latter are intimately connected (World Bank, 2016, p. 4). Another dimension in need for clarification is the following. Do we refer to inequality between nations or to inequality between individuals in the same country? Depending on what the underlying assumption, the answer can be quite different. Usually inequality is measured with regard to income or consumption expenditures (see also the objective of shared prosperity mentioned earlier). However, it clearly touches all other dimensions of well-being such as education, access to land and productive inputs, health, and other capabilities that resonate very well with this research. Interestingly, those are often correlated with income deprivation (World Bank, 2016), again resonating with this research's findings.

Globally inequality is decreasing between countries, but within country inequality is very persistent and increasing (Milanovic, 2012; World Bank, 2016). Latin America specifically stands out as a high inequality region, and in fact, it is the most unequal region of the world (World Bank, 2016). While the region was actually also the one most successful in reducing inequality and poverty decreased significantly (from 41.6 percent in 2003 to 25.3 percent in 2012, and from 24.5 percent to 12.3 percent for extreme poverty, Vakis, Rigolini, & Lucchetti, 2016), many of Latin America's poor are what Vakis, Rigolini, and Lucchetti (2016) call: "chronic poor." The chronic poor have not benefitted from the economic growth of the 2000's and may have fallen into the cracks of the social assistance system; they have been "left behind" as the title of the book suggests. In the period between 2004 and 2012, Nicaragua was among the worst performers in terms of chronic poverty at 37 percent. This share was significantly higher than the regional average of 21 percent (Vakis, Rigolini, & Lucchetti, 2016). Also, globally, Nicaragua has a comparably high Gini of 46.6 (2014, World Development Indicators).

Hence, the differences in outcome and process observed at the micro-level when analyzing how different groups of young women in Nicaragua decide about whether, when, and how to form their families and which other achievements to pursue in their lives are clearly a reflection of broader inequality. Equally importantly, these insights also demonstrate how inequality is reproduced. It is once more very important to note that while this is a case study, rooted in a specific context of one Latin American country, there is a lot to learn from this case study which most likely would apply in other developing country contexts, and most certainly in other countries in Latin America, given similarities context. Inequality as seen in this particular case study is a problem because it prevents the eradication of poverty and because it perpetuates welfare disparities across generations. Effectively, it transmits unfair (dis)advantages to the next generation. It may create and perpetuate poverty traps in which the poor are caught without having the capabilities to exit. The poor mothers in this sample will have children that are born in disadvantaged social and economic circumstances. From a large (and already discussed) body of literature we know that these initial conditions matter for their outcomes later in life (see Heckman, 2006; Heckman & Masterov, 2004; Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua, 2006). As UNICEF

(2016) summarizes: “It may, therefore, be the case that, for some countries, further progress in reducing inequalities in child well-being will require broad social and economic inequalities to be addressed” (p. 40).

Consequently, inequality and its reproduction is a problem of fairness and justice (Rawls, 1971). Equity enhancing interventions should focus strongly on breaking the intergenerational reproduction of inequalities of opportunity. Focusing on children and mothers offers important entry-points to achieve better outcomes in the mid-term perspective. Learning from countries which have successfully reduced inequality, Gasparini, Cruces, and Tornalli (2009) also highlight the importance of pro-poor policies, exemplified by vast conditional cash transfer schemes and by more accessible primary and secondary education. World Bank (2016) also suggests the importance of safety nets, human capital, early childhood development policies, universal access to health care, and good-quality education.

At the same time, these suggestions miss one important aspect shown in this study: inequality and poverty traps are not gender-neutral. The stories of the young poor women clearly illustrate that there is a strong gender dimension to them being ‘trapped’ and left behind. Fathers first have more of a choice: after a girl gets pregnant, biological fathers in the study ‘decide’ whether or not to become a social father as well, and many opt not to. Even before the actual pregnancy, the combination of poverty and absence of opportunities with traditional gender norms and stereotypes leads to constraints in outcomes specific to women—constraints that do not apply to poor men in the same ways. The exposure to norms that prevent them from pursuing those opportunities that are available, and the absence of female role models and examples also leads to poor women lowering their aspirations regarding their life plans. An environment that insinuates that the only way they become an adult is by forming a family and ultimately, by having a child, strongly furthers the notion of a gendered trap.

Experiencing teenage pregnancies—if paired with an absence of effective support systems, opportunities and agency—has further implications on the formation of the identity of poor young women. Early motherhood can have lasting impacts on multiple dimensions of young women’s lives. Early motherhood can become an end in itself, not leaving any time, space, and hope for other tasks, activities, roles to fulfill, and things to achieve. It may be or become the imagined ‘objective’ of identity development for young poor women, who consequently may stop to invest in other dimensions of their future and identity. Pregnancy, in a context of poverty and traditional gender systems, triggers a focus on care and domesticity. Beyond mere time use aspects, it also leads to a shift in focus: primary focus now is the child’s well-being, and hence, efforts and investments are made accordingly. Thus, the girl herself and her own objectives are considered ‘fulfilled,’ despite the fact that identity exploration could still continue beyond the age she is currently at. In addition, having a child makes them more vulnerable and more dependent, either on their family of origin whose economic support they need or on their partner. Thus, the pregnancy may actually reinforce pre-existing vulnerability and dependence, a situation which may impede them from acting individually and agentically. Furthermore, some of the costs and

consequences of teenage may restrict young women's further development. These include emotional and psychological well-being aspects. In particular, the poor women, who have not planned the pregnancy and are confronted with rejection of their parents, often react with strong feelings of guilt and diminished self-esteem. Importantly, some of these risks may be risks the adolescent middle-class mothers are facing as well. However, the support systems in place among that group help them maneuver around these challenges. The combination of these factors may not only have important negative effects for the development of the young mothers and their own outcomes, but also for that of their children, who will grow up in similarly vulnerable situations and conditions of poverty and gender inequality, framing their preferences and aspirations based on the context they will be familiar with.

Hence, this research illustrates the importance of taking the gender dimension into consideration when discussing the vicious cycle of poverty, vulnerability, and inequality and its intergenerational transmission.





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## Annexes

Annex 1: Methodological Annex

Annex 2: Translated quotations

Annex 3: Research instruments



## Annex 1: Methodological Annex

In the following section the methodological approach to respond to the research questions put forward in this dissertation will be explained more in-depth (see overview in Chapter 2). The section will present discussions on both data collection and analysis by portraying the different research steps applied.

### Research questions

The main research questions pursued in this dissertation were as follows:

- Why, how, and under which circumstances do some girls choose to become mothers and others choose not to become mothers?
- What are the circumstances for girls who did not intentionally become mothers but did not decide against becoming mothers either (and today are mothers)?
- What is the role of boys and men who father the children of adolescent girls and how do they participate in or influence the processes of choice and decision?

### A qualitative approach

“Capturing and understanding diverse perspectives, observing and analyzing behaviors in context, looking for patterns in what human beings do and think – and examining the implications of those patterns – these are some of the basic contributions of qualitative inquiry.” (Patton, 2015, p. 8)

Qualitative methods are best suited to respond to the above mentioned research questions for a number of reasons. The principle of openness is characteristic to qualitative inquiry, opposed to quantitative methods which are appropriate to verify previously defined hypotheses. Openness is an important principal in this work since the main questions of this dissertation are ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, not ‘how many’ questions or necessarily such that aim to explore strict causalities. In addition, qualitative methods allow for explorations of agency, aspirations, emotions, intra-household and community-level dynamics, social norms, and gender roles and hence are well suited to facilitate the exploration of the questions that are at the heart of this dissertation: the decision-making processes around teenage childbearing.

Human behavior and decision-making are extremely complex and often irrational. Quantitative methods use prepared and closed questions to assess whether a woman intended to become a mother. Yet such issues as a mother’s bonding with the baby after birth, and the negative (or positive) reactions from peers and family might influence the way she will respond to questions

on intendedness of a pregnancy. Qualitative methods allow for going deeper and exploring more in-depth the conditions and motivations that led to the pregnancy.

Qualitative research inquires into stories of individuals and hereby relies on understanding the context of that individual. A qualitative approach thus helps illustrate this context and systemic factors that frame specific behaviors or decisions. These systemic factors include norms, family, political, institutional, historic and economic context of the individual (see Patton, 2015, p. 8). Context is particularly important to understand complex decisions such as the question whether or not and when or under which conditions to have a child.

Qualitative research can also shed light on the ‘meanings’ attached to certain concepts or occurrences. This is particularly relevant for this dissertation given the importance of such concepts as ‘motherhood’, ‘independence’, ‘adulthood’ etc. and the meanings attached to it. While the body of research on teenage pregnancy is growing, the perspectives of young mothers themselves are often absent from the literature. In that sense, qualitative methods add value since they capture the meanings attached to pregnancy and motherhood, the perceptions of opportunities, and the internalization of social norms etc. by giving women the opportunity to respond in their own words rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses.

Finally, exploring pregnancy and sexuality involves the posing of very intimate and personal questions, another reason for the use of the qualitative approach: In a qualitative in-depth interview, the interviewer typically spends more time with the interviewee, entering with less personal and difficult questions, slowly establishing a rapport with the interviewee who then may feel more comfortable sharing more personal details and potentially respond to more difficult questions.

## Previous research this methodological approach builds on

This work builds methodologically on a qualitative background study for a World Bank regional report on teenage pregnancy (Azevedo et al., 2012) conducted in Ecuador (led by myself). This qualitative study was conducted to complement the quantitative analysis with qualitative insights, thus applying a very broad research instrument including issues related to risk factors, information, individual contextual settings, service delivery and consequences. The findings of that study are presented in Azevedo et al (2012). Second, the same research instruments were adapted and applied in a study in Paraguay (also led by myself). Findings of that study were summarized and included in the Paraguay Equity Assessment (Garriga et al., 2014).

In comparison to this study and its replication in Paraguay, the research instruments developed for this study were developed with much stricter focus aiming to deepen specific themes of interest. The value added of this research is the focus on gender relations and gender norms, aspirations and perceptions of opportunities and empowerment. These issues emerged in the

previously conducted studies in Ecuador and Paraguay as potentially very important, but given the breadth of the instruments applied then, deserved to be put at the center of the research design in order to be deepened further. Possibly most important though, a considerable share of young women interviewed in Paraguay and Ecuador had not planned their pregnancies – but neither had they taken a decision to avoid pregnancy. Thus, digging deeper into what influences decision-making and the capacity to make a decision regarding one’s fertility seemed a crucial point worthwhile shedding light on to understand the overall phenomenon better. In addition, a review of several dedicated studies on the subject that have been conducted in Nicaragua (UNFPA, 1999; Guttmacher Institute, 2006, 2007 and 2010; Zelaya, 1997; PATH 2012; Castillo Aramburu, 2005; Blandón, 2006; Antillón, 2012; UNFPA/CANTERA, 2012; Quintanilla, 2014) was also important to inform the development of the research design. Finally, the empirical value added is the recruitment of participants from ‘under-researched’ groups related to this topic: Not only poor teenage mothers were included (as most often in similar research) but also middle-class teenage mothers and fathers of children born to adolescent mothers.

## Research sample – participants’ profiles

Based on the main research questions, the recruitment criteria were defined as described in Table 8 below. I was supported by a team of four local researchers to organize the entry into the community, partially conduct the interviews, and transcribe the interviews. The following table also shows the number of interviews conducted by myself while in Nicaragua:

Table 8: Overview research sample

Semi-structured in-depth interviews with:	Total number of interviews conducted	Number of interviews conducted by myself
POOR: Women (18-24 years old) who became mothers between age 15 and 19	31	11
POOR: Women (20-24 years old) who did not have a pregnancy by age 19	19	3
MIDDLE-CLASS: Women (18-24 years old) who became mothers between age 15 and 19	5	2
MIDDLE-CLASS: Women (20-24 years old) who did not have a pregnancy by age 19	6	2
Men who father children of adolescent mothers	12	1
Key informants (representatives of international development agencies, local researchers, representatives of NGOs engaged in issues related to gender and youth)	9	6
Validation interviews with key informants	9	9

As can be seen in this table, the overall sample included six subsamples:

- poor women (18-24 years) who became mothers between age 15 and 19;

- poor women (20-24 years) who did not have a pregnancy by age 19;
- middle-class women (18-24 years) who became mothers between age 15 and 19;
- middle-class women (20-24 years) who did not have a pregnancy by 19;
- men who are fathers of children of adolescent mothers;
- key informants.

The reason behind the identification of the four sub-samples of women (not including key informants or men) was based on the review of literature indicating that there are significant differences between social groups with the poor being usually more likely to experience teenage motherhood (Heilborn & Cabral, 2011; Azevedo et al., 2012; Kearney & Levine, 2011). At the same time, the link between teenage pregnancies and (the lack of) opportunities has also been broadly highlighted in the (mostly quantitative) literature on the issue. Thus, researching the four different groups listed above would enable me to draw comparisons of why and how young women make decisions regarding their fertility.

Only women and men 18 years or older were included in the sample given that interviewing minors would have possibly been more challenging since it would have been needed to obtain parental consent. Furthermore, it was decided to only include pregnancies that occurred between ages 15 and 19, given the assumed differences comparing pregnancies before the age of 15 with those after 15. There is a predominance of research on pregnancies that occur between 15 and 19 years of age when analyzing ‘teenage pregnancy’. A pragmatic reason behind that fact is likely that the youngest informants responding in DHS surveys are 15 years old. More importantly though, when occurring before age 15, pregnancies may be due to different circumstances and may thus require a particular analysis and research approach (FLASOG, 2010). Pregnancies before age 15 are often associated to (sexual) violence. A study in Argentina showed that the first sexual intercourse of young women – if happening before age 13 – was most of the times forced. In contrast, none of the sexual initiations of those in the study that happened at age 17 or 18 was forced (Pantelides & Geldstein, 1998). Data from Brazil (while not suggesting equally strong linkages between violence and earlier sexual initiation) supports the argument of some association between the two variables: 4.9 percent of sexual initiations before age 15 were forced compared to only 0.4 percent of those between 15 and 17 and none among those between age 18 and 24 (BENFAM, 1999).

The design of the study applied purposeful sampling: “Strategically selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated.” (Patton, 2015, p. 265). Cases were selected because they were expected to be: “‘information rich’ and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon, not empirical generalizations from a sample to a population.” (Patton, 2015, p. 46). Concretely, the study relied on typical case sampling – as Patton (2015) explains: “Select and study several cases that are average to understand, illustrate, and/or highlight what is typical, normal, and



average” (p. 268). The identification of these typical cases was based on three simple criteria applied by the recruiting local team:

- poor versus middle-class
- age (currently 18/20 – 24 years old)<sup>127</sup>
- pregnancy experience between 15 and 19 years of age versus no pregnancy experience during that time frame.

Neither the poor nor the middle-class participants recruited for this study were selected based on a strictly monetary definition of poverty/middle-class (see Ferreira et al., 2012)<sup>128</sup>. Instead, a combination of indicators related to area of residence and individual/family characteristics were taken into consideration for recruitment purposes.

Originally, the plan was to confirm social class by requesting information approximating family income and satisfaction of basic needs through a questionnaire applied to each study participant after the interview. However, it turned out that informants had barely any information about their parents’ or other household members’ income. Hence, monetary measures were dropped in favor of neighborhood characteristics and observations of certain personal/family characteristics (such as the quality of housing, sanitation, number of dependents per income, formality of income etc.) in the case of the poor. With regards to middle-class, key informants had identified the following as criteria that define the middle-class in Nicaragua (independent of primarily monetary criteria): the ability to hire domestic workers for cleaning and child care; quality of housing; reliable access to electricity and air conditioning; absence of social assistance; a focus on professional careers; and children’s enrollment in private universities.

While potentially a limitation because economic conditions may vary between the different participants within the same group, this recruitment strategy seems adequate given that class affiliation is not merely rooted in economic capital – Bourdieu prominently argues how class attribution goes beyond the economic, to include cultural, social and symbolic capital. Furthermore, the general idea that class affiliation is something that is not only an objective attribution, but is also a subjective measure is reflected in the fact that the middle-class interviewees sometimes did distinguish themselves as ‘middle-class’ in the actual interviews, differentiating their own positions, situations in relation to others.

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<sup>127</sup> Note that the upper boundary for recruitment was lifted for some participants in the poor sample (the fact that they did not qualify was mistakenly not validated when interviews started and hence only noticed during the interview). For the middle-class this criterium was lifted after multiple recruitment attempts sticking to the exact age range had failed.

<sup>128</sup> Ferreira et al. (2012) who defined four economic groups based on the concept of economic security: (i) the poor who are those individuals with a per capita income below \$4 per person per day; (ii) the vulnerable who are with high risk of falling back into poverty and have incomes between \$4 to \$10 per person per day; (iii) the middle-class who are those individuals living with incomes between \$10 and \$50 per person per day; and (iv) the rich who are those with incomes above \$50 per person per day (all in 2005 US\$ PPP).

While pragmatically the only way to implement the differentiation in class, the interviews and actual realities of research participants seem to point to a) a mix in terms of depth of poverty among the poor interviewees with some being less disadvantaged and deprived than others, and b) a general tendency for upper middle-class status among the participants in the middle-class groups. At the same time, the underlying assumption here is that these groups are not fully homogeneous, precisely given the multitude of factors that determine whether or not an individual would be considered “poor”/ “middle-class” by others and him/herself.

The primary research interest in the decision of the poor (given the much higher adolescent fertility rates among them) is reflected in the significantly greater number of individual research participants among the poor.

The following table presents the research sample:

Table 9: Poor women with pregnancy experience

Name/anonymized reference	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	No. of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
A.	19	housewife	3rd grade of secondary	depends on her husband	husband is a plumber ; fixed income in a firm; her main asset: a pork that she considers her savings	1	4	first pregnancy at 14 - lost it; subsequent pregnancy and child	daughter, husband, mother in law
B.	19	housewife	3rd grade of secondary	depends on father of her daughter ; stepfather	stepfather is vendor in a bakery, aunt works in Zona Franca; mother cleans laundry and houses and takes care of children	1	2	17	her daughter and herself; mother, stepfather and 3 brothers/sisters; aunt and her children; maternal grandparents

Name/anonymized reference	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	No. of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
C.	22	housewife	1st grade of secondary	depends on husband	husband (details missing)	2	4 years; 3 months	17	live on a slot with other family members; interviewee shares a room with husband; father in law; sister in law and her husband and their daughter
D.	19	housewife	1st grade of secondary	depends on husband	husband, her father and her brother (details missing)	1	1.5	17	her husband, daughter and herself; brother with wife and children; father
E.	18	takes care of her sister's daughter and does her laundry, too	Primary school	OWN income from helping her sister (taking care of her niece, cleaning)	salary of the sister as a domestic worker; support from uncle and from her mother's husband	1	4	14	mother; sister and child; herself and child

Name/anonymized reference	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	No. of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
F.	20	studies, takes care of child, gives charlas in her community	5th grade	depends on mother and brother	mother: secretary; brother: ticket seller in a bus bus; sometimes support from family of the father of the child	1	4	16	2 sisters, 2 brothers, mother, her son and herself
G.	25	housewife	2nd grade of secondary	OWN - sometimes does laundry and irons laundry	husband works as an assistant driver in a sausage factory. Fixed work.	3	10 years, 6 years, 2 years	15	shared land with other family members but each responsible for their expenses; aunt and her daughters; father in law; each have separate rooms

Name/anonymized reference	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	No. of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
H.	18	housewife	6th grade	depends on her husband	husband works in construction	1	10 months	17	lot is shared with other family members, her husband and herself have a separate room; mother in law (doesn't work); her sister in law and her husband have another room
I.	19	housewife, takes care of her sister's daughter	5th grade	OWN - taking care of her niece; support from the family of the father from time to time	her mother (military); her stepfather (irregular works); sister (Zona Franca)	1	2	17	her sister and her daughter; mother and stepfather; herself and child
J.	19	studies on Sundays; housewife	1st year of University	depends on her husband	her husband (clothes shop)	1	8 months	18	her husband, herself, child
K.	24	owns a pulperia (corner shop)	3rd year of University	OWN - owns a shop	her shop, income of her husband (car mechanic)	1	5 years	19	her husband, daughter, herself

Name/anonymized reference	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	No. of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
L.	21	assistant in the Zona Franca	4th grade of secondary	OWN - her work in Zona Franca	her own income, income of her husband (mechanic in a fabric)	1	2	19	her husband and child; mother in law; 2 brothers of the husband and one sister in law; 2 children of the brother
M.	24	housewife	6th grade	depends on husband's income	husband is technician at a gas station (fixed)	2	9; 4	15	husband, 2 children, herself
N.	22	works in the Zona Franca	1st year of secondary	OWN - her own income Zona Franca	hers and her husband's income from Zona Franca	2	4; 3	18	husband and children in one house, same lot: sister with her family
O.	22	NGO worker	studies law in University (1st year)	OWN - her job at NGO	her own, father of child sometimes helps out (irregularly)	1	3	19	mother, sister, child, herself, stepfather
P.	21	studies and housewife	3rd year of secondary	depends on her husband's income	partner works as a mosquito sprayer for the Ministry of Health; mother sells food	1	1.5	19	husband, child, herself, mother

Name/anonymized reference	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	No. of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
Q.	19	housewife	3rd year of secondary	depends on her partner's income	partner works in construction	2	1 died recently; currently pregnant again	17	husband
R.	17	studies	5th year of secondary	depends on her husband's income	husband works in construction	1	1	16	husband and daughter
S.	21	studies and housewife	5th year of secondary	depends on her husband's income	husband works in construction	1	4	17	husband and children in one house, same lot: sister with her family
T.	21	housewife	5th of primary	depends on her husband's income	husband works as a construction worker	2	2; 6 months	19	husband and children
U.	20	housewife	2nd grade of secondary	depends on husband's income; she sometimes cleans clothes and takes care of other children	husband is a construction worker	2	5; 2	15	husband and children
V.	18	Studies and housewife	2nd grade of secondary	depends on husband's income	husband is a construction worker	2	1 died at 16 months; 1 currently pregnant	16	partner



Name/anonymized reference	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	No. of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
W.	17	domestic worker	3rd grade of secondary	her own income as domestic worker	hers and her husband's income (carpenter - paid per product)	1	1.5	15	partner and child
X.	19	recycles trash	1st grade of secondary	OWN - recycling	her income from recycling	1	3 years	16	herself and child
Y.	27	sells at the market	6th grade of primary	OWN - sells in market	her own income, income of her husband (mechanic in a fabric)	4	12; 11; 7; 6 (from 2 different partners)	15	herself and the children
Z.	20	studies and works for NGO	2nd year of University (hotelling)	OWN - NGO work	hers and her partner has a small shop	1	4	16	herself and her daughter
A.	22	studies and works for NGO	5th year of University (social work)	OWN - NGO work	her own salary	1	3	22	herself, mother and 12 family members who contribute somehow to expenses
B.	21	housewife	2nd grade of secondary	depends on her husband's income	husband works in construction (sometimes father of her child supports her)	1	2	19	herself, partner, child

Name/anonymized reference	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interview	Main income household income	No. of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
C.	24	NGO worker	2nd year of university (accounting)	OWN - NGO work	hers and her husband's income (tiler)	2	8; 1	16	herself, one of the children, current partner
D.	25	NGO worker	3rd grade of secondary	OWN - NGO work	hers and partner's income (raffle distributor)	3	10; 5; 1	15	herself, partner and children
E.	27	NGO worker	3rd grade of secondary	OWN - NGO work	her income from recycling	3	11; 6; 4	16	herself and children

Table 10: Middle-class women with pregnancy experience

Name	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	No. of children	Age of children in years	Birth age	Composition of household
F.	21	own business (handicraft atelier)	3rd year of University (architecture)	OWN - handicraft business	support from her parents	1	6	15	herself, brother, child and parents
G.	25	works in marketing	finished University (communications)	OWN – marketing	hers and her husband's salary (pilot)	1	12	13	herself, child, husband and her parents
H.	30	works selling financial products	College in the US	OWN - works in a bank	hers and her partner (finance, Bank); significant financial support by her and her husband's families (very wealthy)	1	14	16	herself, husband, son
I.	27	works in marketing; enrolled in her 2nd course at University	currently completing marketing at university; completed economic law	OWN - marketing	her own and her father supports	1	9	18	herself, father, mother, and child
J.	26	free-lance in design	completed master in design and marketing (Argentina/Belgium)	OWN - designer	her own and her father's (sometimes support from father)	1	8	18	herself, her parents and her daughter

Table 11: Poor women no pregnancy experience

Name	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	Number of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
A.	22	university student	2nd year of Journalism/university	depends on her partner	her partner; her stepfather; her siblings	none	-	-	her partner; father and stepfather; 7 siblings
B.	24	works and studies	Completed secondary	depends on her partner	partner works in Zona Franca	1	4	20	herself and partner and son; sister and her family with 2 kids; father and mother
C.	21	works and studies	University (1st year of journalism)	her own small refreshment shop	her mother sends remittances; her shop; her partner	1	6 months	20	her partner and child; siblings with their wives
D.	19	studies (English communication course)	Completed secondary	her parents	father is construction worker; mother works in a market selling shoes	none			her brother and parents
E.	20	teacher	Completed secondary	her own income	hers and her aunt's income	1	6 months	20	aunt, grandmother, sister, daughter
F.	19	studies and works in a shop	Completed secondary	OWN income - her job in a small shop (that she co-owns with some friends)	her job is informal / father has a fixed income	none			grandparents, father, mother, 2 siblings

Name	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	Number of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
G.	20	studies at the university; volunteer for an NGO	Social communication at the Univ (2nd year)	depends on her parents	Father's income	none			parents, herself, 4 siblings, one of them with his wife and daughter
H.	22	housewife	6th grade	OWN - she sells cooked beans	her own income and her partners (Zona Franca); her mother and father in law (she: informal - selling Avon products )	1	6 months	21	her partner, child, herself; parents in law; 2 sisters in law with their children
I.	23	helps her mother in the house	4th grade of secondary	depends on father's income	father security; but many people in the house depend on income	1	2	21	parents; her daughter and she; 2 brothers with their wives; sister
J.	19	works (packaging)	2nd grade of the secondary	OWN - packaging	her own income, her brother (her mother and stepfather are unemployed currently )	none			mother, stepfather; 3 siblings

Name	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	Number of children	Age of children in years	Birth age	Composition of household
K.	22	works in the Zona Franca	Completed secondary	OWN - Zona Franca	her own, her parents	1	2	20	her parents; her child and she; brother (28) and sister (15)
L.	20	works in the Zona Franca	1st grade of secondary	OWN - Zona Franca	her own, 2 sisters work, her mother takes care of an elderly woman	none			her mother, her 4 sisters, herself
M.	25	works in an NGO as accounting associate	finished accounting in University	OWN-her job at the NGO	her own	none			lives with a friend and they share the costs
N.	18	studies at the University	first year of University (Hotel management)	depends on mother's income and her partner's income	mother (domestic worker); partner: (accountant in a bank)	none			Mother, partner, brother
O.	21	work: transports children to school	5th grade of secondary	OWN-transporting children to school	hers and her partner's income	none			several relatives and the couple
P.	22	studies at the University	3rd grade of University computer science	depend on her partner's income (car wash) and some support for her studies from the father		none			herself, partner, aunt who is not married

Name	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	Number of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
Q.	20	works in a family owned printing firm and occasionally takes care of children	3rd year of bilingual secretary technical training	OWN - work in the printing business of her family; taking care of children occasionally	her own income and her partner's income as a construction worker	none			herself and partner with her in-laws, several other relatives in the house
R.	18	housewife	1st year of University (hotel management)	depends on partner	partner: works in a window placement firm; eventual help from her father	none			couple lives with her in-laws and other family members
S.	19	works in family printing business and occasionally takes care of children	5th grade of secondary	depends on partner	partner: sells video games and repairs equipment; her own sporadic income	none			couple lives with in-laws and other family members

Table 12: Middle-class women no pregnancy experience

Name	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	Number of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
T.	18	studies in University	3rd year of Social Communication	depends on parents	mother: psychologist; father: owns businesses and rents places	none			parents, 3 siblings, herself
U.	19	studies in University	3rd year of Social Communication	depends on parents	father: owns a pharmacy	none			her father (mother passed away); 2 siblings
V.	20	studies in University	3rd year of Social Communication	depends on parents	mother: administrative assistant; financial support from her maternal grandmother; separated from father who occasionally supports them; manager in a Bank;	none			herself and mother
W.	24	co-owner of an advertising company and professional photographer	finished University (graphic design)	OWN income from her firm	her income; her parents	none			her parents, brother, herself
X.	24	owns a gourmet restaurant	finished University (gastronomy in Italy)	OWN income from her restaurant	father works for international organization	none			lives by herself



Name	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	Number of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age	Composition of household
Y.	25.	housewife	Finished University	depends on husband and father	husband owns a tourism firm	1	8 months	24	husband, son, herself

Table 13: Fathers of children born to adolescent mothers

Name	Age	Current Occupation	Highest level of education achieved	Income source interviewee	Main income household income	Number of children	Age of children in years	Birth at age
A.	22	works for MINSA (fumigator)	technician - nursing	his income	his income	1	unclear	unclear
B.	24	works in a Bank (cashier)	2nd year of University (electronic engineering)	his income	his income	1	5	19
C.	18	works selling things (informal market)	2nd grade of secondary	his income	his income, his father in law and the partners of his sisters in law	1	4 months	18
D.	24	works as a barber	1st grade of secondary	his income	his income	1	2	22
E.	23	works in the Zona Franca	Completed secondary	his income	his income	2	4; 1	19
F.	38	works in a gas station	3rd grade of secondary	his income	his income	4 (3 with first wife, 1 with second wife)	19; 17; 11; 4	19
G.	24	works (sells cosmetics)	Completed secondary	his income	his income	2	4; 3 months	20
H.	30	works for MINSA	6th grade of primary	his income	his income and his wife's income (unclear what - but receives a salary)	3	17; 13; 12	13
I.	22	works (messenger)	3rd grade of secondary	his income	his income	2	2; 2 months	20
J.	25	works (waiter in a bar)	2nd grade of secondary	his income	his income	1	5	20
K.	22	works (construction)	4th grade of secondary	his income (construction worker)	his income	1	5	17
L.	19	unemployed	3rd grade of secondary	depends on his parents' economic support	his parents economic support	2	2; about to deliver second baby	17

While this is not a representative sample and quantification of any of the characteristics outlined in the above table are not very meaningful, I still believe there is some interesting information when describing and comparing the key characteristics of the sub-samples. The sample of poor women with pregnancy experience consisted of 13 young women who mentioned 'being a housewife' as their main and only occupation and additionally a small number of young women who said they are housewives and study. At the same time, the share of housewives is significantly higher than it appears if one only considers the Ciudad Sandino sample (8 out of 14 are housewives). Almost all young women recruited through the NGO worked (an outcome which had been supported by the NGO since achieving financial independence for young women in crisis is one of their objectives). With regards to education, only 5 out of the 31 young women have started or are still currently enrolled in University (again, 3 out of those have been supported by the NGO in that path). All the other poor young women with pregnancy experience had dropped out of secondary at some point (with the exception of two women who did not go beyond primary school). Half of the sample (16) fully depend economically on someone (15 on their partner or the father of their child and one on her mother). The remainder has access to some form of own income including regular jobs such as those at the NGO, the Zona Franca or through irregular jobs such as taking care of children in the extended family or neighborhood, cooking or doing laundry for others. The main income of the households these young women reside in is provided by their partners (mostly construction workers, mechanics, workers at the Zona Franca etc.) but the households tend to pool resources from several members (with regular and irregular incomes). Most interviewees in this group had only one child, however it is noteworthy that 8 had two children already, 3 had 3 already and one had 4. Two thirds (22) had their first child before the age of 18 while 9 had it at either 18 or 19 years of age. Only about one third of the poor mothers lives without a partner, 22 live with either the father of the child or with a new partner. 14 live in extended families, however, 11 of those live in Ciudad Sandino (out of 15 interviewees in this group) and thus constitute the vast majority of the interviewees in Ciudad Sandino in this sub-sample.

The middle-class participants with a pregnancy experience all finished University (one is still enrolled), two even studied abroad. All of these women have an income of their own, and all of their incomes are substantial contributions to the overall household income. None of them have more than one child and three of them had the child before age 17. Four out of the five live with their parents and three of them raise their child without a partner.

The poor women without pregnancy experience (19 in total) rarely mention housewife to be their principal occupation if compared to the poor with pregnancy experience (3 in total). Also, 8 study or finished University and only 5 dropped out of secondary school. About half the sample (9 women) depends on someone economically (5 on their partner, 4 on their own parents). The others have some income on their own including jobs in the Zona Franca, small businesses or irregular jobs. Similar to the poor with pregnancy experience, the household income is brought together usually by several contributors belonging to the household – the difference seems to be

that in these cases the young women also contribute more substantially. In Ciudad Sandino, 6 out of the 13 women recruited for that sub-sample had a child at the moment of the interview, 4 immediately after adolescence (at age 20) and 2 a year later (at 21). Slightly more than half (13) live in extended families, the others live in nuclear families.

The middle-class women without pregnancy all finished or are currently enrolled in University (not unexpected though given that bias in the recruitment strategy for that group: snow ball sampling through University students). One of these women depends economically on her partner – the other five depend on their parents. Two of them have some form of income on their own. One of the interviewees had a child at the moment of the interview (at age 24).

## Recruitment process

Participants were recruited by the local research team, which consisted of three female and one male consultants, with the support of people from the community or NGOs. Ciudad Sandino was identified as the main community for recruitment of poor participants, mostly given the high levels of poverty among the inhabitants. In Ciudad Sandino, a 21-year-old female resident facilitated the initial contact with the interviewees. She lives in the community herself and approached young women and men based on her local knowledge. Furthermore, she also formerly worked in an NGO that is active in Ciudad Sandino and thus has a very good knowledge of the municipality beyond her own personal contacts. She reached out to the interviewees prior to the fieldwork start by explaining the purpose and content of the study (and confirming the recruitment criteria). Most women invited to take part in the study had no objections. Only a very small number did not participate. She arranged the interviewing schedule for the time of fieldwork and confirmed the dates and time by phone or personally shortly before the interview was then actually held in person.

A smaller number of poor girls with pregnancy experience were recruited through the personal contacts of one consultant with a local NGO in the city of Managua<sup>129</sup>. This organization pursues the objective of bringing comprehensive services, protection, and attention to children and youth at risk in the city of Managua particularly.

The recruitment of middle-class participants was more challenging. Middle-class women are more dispersed geographically and tend to spend less time in their houses, which makes it hard to recruit by knocking on their doors (as was done with the poor). Moreover, the consultants facilitating the recruitment reported that middle-class women were often more reluctant to participate in research projects compared to poorer segments of the population, particularly one that involves sensitive topics such as sexuality. For that reason, the team had to resort to

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<sup>129</sup> Since several of the study participants are still engaged with the NGO – some even as staff – the name of the organization will not be revealed to protect the privacy of the interviewees.

individual contacts of the local consultant team to recruit the sub-sample of middle-class women with pregnancy experience. The sub-sample of middle-class women without pregnancy experience was recruited from a local University (UCA) through snowball sampling.

The men included in the sample were approached through an NGO as well<sup>130</sup>. This organization works on the promotion of gender equality including trainings, capacity building, and awareness raising. Unfortunately, it was not possible to retrospectively find out something which was not included in the initial interviews with men, which is the question to which extent the interviewees recruited for this study had gone through this process (whether they had completed some modules or even attended them etc.).

Finally, there is one particularity to the sample that is noteworthy to mention. While the goal was to recruit poor women with and without pregnancy experience during adolescence it turned out that the criteria led to a sub-sample of poor without pregnancy during adolescence with 6 out of 12 recruited in Ciudad Sandino who had a child – born after adolescence. Thus, at the moment of interviewing these young women actually were mothers, the pregnancy occurred mostly just right after adolescence (at the age of 20 or 21). While to some extent valuable data in and of itself since it shows that young poor women in that context may not necessarily postpone pregnancy significantly beyond the teenage years, this was also perceived as somewhat problematic since the women recruited would share the experience of motherhood and thus would likely not vary significantly from the sub-sample poor with pregnancy experience. For that reason, that sample was increased during fieldwork to reach the number of 19 total (with the help of the NGO mentioned before) and rephrased the criterion ‘without pregnancy experience during adolescence’ to ‘never had a pregnancy/child’.

## Key informant interviews

In addition to young women and their partners, the study drew on key informant interviews. Key informants are people with specific knowledge on a certain topic who can shed light on particular aspects of the main topic under analysis given their specific expertise or insights. They may help establish a link between the researcher and the community or the research object.

These interviews relied on a broad range of experts: gender specialists, academics (Sociology), representatives of the women’s movement, education specialists, social workers in Ciudad Sandino, and other experts working on youth and/or gender issues in the country. Their perspectives on the issue were extremely helpful to shed light on a multitude of issues that contextualize teenage pregnancies in the country (such as cultural, social, political and economic

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<sup>130</sup> Similarly, to protect privacy of participants the name of the NGO will not be revealed.

factors). Not only was this essential for the design of the research instrument, but even more so for the analysis of the data afterwards.

## Field work

Field work was conducted in June and July 2014 in Managua by myself and four local researchers (three female, one male, hired as consultants). Obviously, different interviewers have different interviewing styles and put emphasis on different points – specifically when applying a qualitative research guide. At the same time, regularly held group reflections among the interviewers added significant value in data collection and for subsequent data analysis. Additionally, the local research team added significant value to the interpretation of results given their insights in the country's social, historic, political and economic context. They were also able to point me to a number of important literature reference which I would not have been able to identify without their support. Finally, they facilitated access to key informants and to the communities.

Interviews in Ciudad Sandino with poor women and two fathers were conducted in person in the participants' houses. This was particularly useful to collect additional qualitative data through observation. As Owen (2008) states: "Conducting research in participants' natural environments is essential. Researchers must meet participants where they are, in the field, so that data collection occurs while people are engaging in their everyday practices." (p. 547). Family members took care of the children during the interviews. Field work was conducted during the day (between 9 am and 6 pm) during the week – some interviews were conducted on weekends to be able to include those interviewees that were working and were unable to participate during the week. Participants recruited through the NGOs were interviewed at the agency's facilities and middle-class participants were interviewed at Universidad Centroamericana, or in other neutral settings such as coffee shops, and in two cases by Skype video call. Due to the sensitivity of the issues addressed in the interviews, the team's male researcher conducted 10 of the 12 interviews with men based on the assumption that men would be more comfortable to share sensitive details about their relationships, sexuality, concerns etc. with a male interviewer. Upon completion of the interviews, interviewees were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the interview. Almost every participant explicitly referred to the interview as a positive experience. Several said it enabled them to "reflect" or to "share" and that it made them feel good "being listened to."

During field work, field notes were also taken which then served as the basis of the regular discussion meetings with the local research team.

## The field: Ciudad Sandino

Ciudad Sandino is a municipality within the department of Managua with an estimated population of approximately 75,000 people. The main road leading into the municipality reveals a rather

urban image: the mayor's office, a supermarket, police station, a health center, mobile phone shops, and very vivid street life. In that central area of the municipality there is also a relatively large street market with small businesses selling textiles, food, household equipment etc. Most interviews were conducted in a radius of about 5-10 min car ride from this center. The areas adjacent to the main center are predominantly residential, but feature small shops in people's houses and bars. Many children play in the streets and in public spaces such as baseball squares.

During the discussion meetings with the research team, some members shared security concerns since locally it is well known that certain areas of Ciudad Sandino are not completely safe. Most recently, drug consume and sale seem to have increased significantly in the area. Young men who may see an easy and effective income generating opportunity in the drug businesses were mentioned as an issue of particular concern by key informants who also referred to very high dropout rates from secondary schooling in that area. 'Pandillas' – or gangs – have also increased their presence in the municipality throughout the past few years according to key informants.

Houses vary in quality – some are built in solid materials, some are built from different types of materials. Several interviewees live in extended families with more than five people under one roof. All houses visited had televisions, bed and kitchen areas. Sanitation conditions were diverse, with toilets almost always located outside the house. People keep their houses very clean (cleaning the house was referred to as one of the main common activities in a regular day by the young women). Some people have houses with cement floor, others have open floors, and some live partially in improvised extended rooms. At least two study participants were permanently sleeping in a patio due to lack of space in the house. Few interviewees had motor vehicles, though some had bicycles. To go to Managua, people take a public bus or arrange a ride with someone in the community. Since there are a lot of unpaved streets in the municipality, heavy loads of dust accumulate in the air.

Having always been a rather poor municipality but closely connected with Managua, Ciudad Sandino has historically benefited from the presence of NGOs according to key informants familiar with the area.

## Validation interviews

After the finalization of the first data review, in June 2015, I went back to Nicaragua to a) explore more in-depth some of the themes emerging from the data, b) deepen information on some contextual factors arising from the data, c) validate some of the key findings. First, I met with the local research team to go over some general questions that had come up during the first review of the data (regarding the Nicaraguan context, the application of the instruments and details about the recruitment process). Then, I conducted key informant interviews to validate and contextualize some of the emerging findings. Furthermore, I wanted to deepen the information collected in the first field visit on the following subjects:

- Contextual information: More specific information on Ciudad Sandino; information on specific institutions, policies, stakeholders or programs related to by interviewees; clarification on some historical and political issues referenced in the first round.
- Sexual information and education: Contextualize some of the findings from the interviews with young people (the role of NGOs, of parents, the absence of a discussion of STDs in the interviews, among others).
- Adolescence and life plans: Validation of finding that life plans are (almost exclusively) present among the middle-class; concepts or meanings attached to adulthood as compared to childhood and as compared to adolescence.
- Education and labor: Information or literature on quality of schooling and (secondary) drop out; discrimination of pregnant teenagers in the education system; the phenomenon of Sunday schools and assessment of their effectiveness; comparison between public and private schools; Zonas Francas – working conditions and alternative employment opportunities available.
- Consequences of early childbearing: Stigmatization in communities versus impacts on self-esteem; stigmatization of single-motherhood.

The validation interviews were conducted by myself with the logistic support of a local consultant (gender expert who was involved in the first round of data collection) who set up the interviews and put together the references mentioned by the informants. The second field visit was extremely helpful since it allowed to deepen emerging issues in the data, triangulation of findings and to direct me to additional local research and literature which I did not have access to prior to the visit and consultations.

## Research instruments

As mentioned before, the instruments were developed based on the ones that I had prepared for two previous studies in Ecuador and Paraguay. My previous research engagement on the issue and literature review conducted for this dissertation also influenced the framing of the issue. The research instruments were developed to focus on the key areas of interest: decision-making around fertility, social norms, aspirations, and opportunities. A guiding principle of this research was to learn from individuals' experiences and interpretations of their own realities. Data were collected in in-depth, face-to-face interviews utilizing a "life course" perspective.

Qualitative research is open and inductive by definition. On the other hand, since this dissertation was based on a solid literature review and the previous qualitative study in Ecuador (and its replication in Paraguay) during which knowledge had been acquired already, I would not be able to claim I started this research project completely neutral. However, following Patton, I did not enter the field 'testing' hypotheses but with 'foreshadowed problems' in mind (Patton, 2015, p. 254). A mix of interview instrumentations was used. In the interview guide approach topics and



issues to be covered are outlined in bullet point form, sequence and wording of questions remains up to the interviewer who is free to apply the outlined blocks in a flexible way. The interview guide serves mainly as a checklist. The standardized open-ended interview instead relies on carefully wording and sequencing each question. During data collection phase the exact wording as well as sequencing of questions will be applied uniformly between all interviews. In this dissertation project a mix between these two instrumentations was applied. Each question was determined in terms of wording mainly to have a clear basis to clarify expectations and meanings attributed to each of the questions with the four other team members who would apply the instruments with the main objective to ensure consistency in the overall approach (not in the details of implementation though). During fieldwork then, the application of those varied based on situational context (and how best to weave the questions of interest into a natural discussion with the interviewee) and neither was the sequence of the questions followed strictly. Furthermore, while probes are listed, they were applied with a lot of flexibility. I personally noted that while becoming more and more familiar with the research instrument, I increased flexibility in applying it with each additional interview. Judging from the audios and transcripts, this seems to have been the case for most interviewers. After reviewing the material, I believe that the more flexible interviews yielded the most depth as in these cases the interviewers were most closely involved with the interviewees, letting themselves be guided by the interviewees.

A narrative, biographic approach was used as the basis for all instruments. The narrative approach to qualitative inquiry focuses on stories. It values the lived experience as a source of knowledge and understanding (Clandinin, 2013). Through life stories we learn about both individuals but also about society and culture more broadly. According to Patton (2015) the difference between story and narrative is to “treat the story as data and the narrative as analysis which involves interpreting the story, placing it in context, and comparing it with other stories. Another distinction is that the story is what happened and the narrative is how the telling of what happened is structured and scripted within some context for some purpose.” (p. 128). Applying a narrative approach and using interview guides as presented earlier may read as a contradiction since the narrative interview is typically conducted freely without an interview guide. The decision to introduce an interview guide was rooted in two main arguments: First of all, a guide would likely increase consistency between the five different interviewers. Secondly, since this research built on previous qualitative research experience on teenage pregnancy in Paraguay and Ecuador some areas of focused interest had been identified prior to fieldwork (gender norms, agency, access to opportunities and decision-making).

The instruments were developed to cover the following thematic categories: family of origin, friendships, community context, daily routine, preferences, aspirations, and relationship with current partner, relationship with father of the child, sexuality, and pregnancy event. Since the overall approach was a life-story narrative approach and prioritizing a natural evolvement of the interview, the guidance to all interviewers was that each of these thematic blocks should be introduced at the participant's pace. However, what consistently remained the same for all

interviews was the opening through the question how the interviewee was doing today and then the request to ‘tell the interviewer something about their family’. This question in particular aimed to explore openly the ‘roots’ of the interviewee – following her ways of ‘telling her story’, aiming to follow her path by eventually deepening the story, possibly using the probes listed in the guide. More sensitive questions which in this research project were those related to sexuality and to the pregnancy event itself were left for after the interviewees had become more confident and comfortable with the interview situation and after the necessary trust between the interviewer and the interviewee had been established - unless they would bring these issues up earlier themselves. As expected, most interviewees were rather silent and short-answered at the beginning of the interview while gaining trust and comfort during the process which was reflected in gradually increasing length and depth of responses as well as a change in body-language and signs of engagement (such as explicit enthusiasm, nodding, affirmative signs etc.). Summarizing, the guiding principle was to somewhat ensure a balance between openness (following the lead of the interviewee) and structure (covering the main issues of interest).

Separate instruments were developed for the following sub-samples:

- Women with pregnancy experience (identical for poor and middle-class interviewees)
- Women without pregnancy experience (identical for poor and middle-class interviewees – and almost identical with the instrument for women with pregnancy experience)
- Men fathering a child of an adolescent mother
- Key informant interview guide

The first draft of the instruments was developed by myself. When in Nicaragua I held a workshop with the local consultant team to receive feedback on wording, particularities in Nicaragua (for instance framing questions around unions rather than marriage etc.). The instruments were slightly revised according to the team’s recommendations. During that same workshop, the structure of the instrument was explained and discussed with the team. It was agreed among all interviewers that each of them would aim to cover the main questions (in bold) while using the non-bold questions below merely as possible orientation for probing<sup>131</sup>. Furthermore, it was agreed that the order of the thematic blocks would not be followed necessarily in a strict manner but that the interviewees would guide us with their responses: Should one of the themes appear earlier in a natural way the building blocks of the instrument would be rearranged during the interview. The objective was to apply the instruments in a very open and flexible way, letting the interviewee guide the conversation. On average, the interviews lasted 45–60 minutes with some “data-rich” ones extending for up to two hours.

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<sup>131</sup> “The key to successful interviewing is learning how to probe effectively – that is, to stimulate a respondent to produce more information, without injecting yourself so much into the interaction that you only get a reflection of yourself in the data.” (Russell, 2006, p. 217)

After the drafting of the instruments, they were piloted in Ciudad Sandino (the main municipality for data collection in this research). The following interviews were conducted during the pilot:

- 2 interviews with a woman – poor and pregnancy experience
- 1 interview with a woman – poor and no pregnancy experience
- 1 interview with a man – fathering a child of an adolescent mother

The instruments were adjusted after the pilot. They were shortened to avoid repetitions and to leave out questions that seemed to be superfluous. Furthermore, the order of questions was changed to arrive more naturally (and thus less abruptly) to the main question on the pregnancy event especially given the sensitivity of talking about sexuality. Furthermore, specific probes that seemed to be superfluous were deleted while some that arose from the first interviewing experience were added. Some clarification notes in italics were added to ensure that all interviewers had the same understanding of questions. Difficult wording that did not resonate with the interviewees during the piloting was revised to make the language more casual and youth-friendly. In order to add to a mutual understanding of priorities, specific sections of the instrument were highlighted in case they were particularly relevant for one of the focus themes (gender norms; decision-making; aspirations). The accompanying data sheet (to be filled by the interviewer after completing the interview) was adjusted as well. The pilot made it obvious that youth do not have a sense of the monetary income of their families (a category previously planned to use as a confirmation for the poverty/non-poverty status of the interviewee). Therefore, the estimated amount of income was replaced by more general observations regarding income such as regular versus irregular, emerging from formal/informal work, and number of people in the household depending on how many workers.

After listening to the audios of the pilot, I also issued a set of recommendations to the interviewers with the objective to increase data quality. They were mostly related to giving the interviewees more space to lead the interview, aiming for the interviewer to only occupy about 15 percent of the speaking time and stressing the need to be very flexible in terms of the application of the instrument while at the same time aiming to cover the main thematic blocks of interest. This included the need to reinforce the idea that interviewers should try to go back to specific questions, dig deeper into specific themes, particularly when interviewees' responses were superficial and overly brief in the main areas of interest for this dissertation project. Finally, the general rule was to interfere as little as possible into the interviewee's narrative in order to give her/him the chance to lead the conversation. Furthermore, the following interview principles were emphasized as important to achieve high data quality:

- Show “empathic neutrality” (Patton, 2015, p. 428).
- Ensure to facilitate transitions between segments and thoughts.
- Ensure interviewees trust they are listened to.
- Be present – and follow interesting paths set out by the interviewees.

I also prepared a handout for the interviewers on how to present the study and start the interview process. This note was prepared to achieve the highest possible levels of consistency among the different interviewers involved in the study and to ensure the rights of the interviewees are guaranteed.

In terms of sequencing, the interviews were always started with an introduction to the research purpose and content followed by the request for oral consent to record the interview. After finalizing the actual interview, the interviewees were given space to give feedback to the interviewer on how they experienced the interview process. After that, the interviewer filled the sheet on general data about the interviewee based on the information acquired during the interview and potentially complemented in parts by the interviewee. In the evenings<sup>132</sup> the interviewers would also summarize their observations for each interview to be discussed in the regular team meetings with the other members of the team.

## Ethical concerns and protocols

The study included no minors. It was limited to girls and boys 18 years and older, though sexual experience and/or the pregnancy event may have occurred before that age. Keeping participation to that age assured that no additional consent from a guardian was needed on top of the informant's own consent.

All interviewers were trained in a team workshop prior to fieldwork. This ensured that the same ethical and confidentiality standards would be applied in all interviews. During recruitment, people were informed about the topic of the interview and the purpose of the study. During the actual interview but before starting the recording, they were once more (additional to the information shared prior to the actual interview by the young woman in the community who facilitated the recruitment) reminded of the objective of the study, told that sensitive questions might arise, and that they could stop the recording or the entire interview at any time or decline to answer specific questions. Oral consent was given by all interviewees prior to starting the recording and the actual interview. During interviews, their right to stop the interview, stop the recording or take a break was repeated following the principle of constant consent.

While it was not possible to always conduct interviews in completely separate spaces (given that not in all cases did the interviewees invite interviewers into their houses but most interviews were conducted in their yards or in front of their houses), interviewers were reminded to always ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the information provided was ensured by regulating the tone of voice, staying alert for people around the interview scene approaching the set of the interview

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<sup>132</sup> While it would have been preferable to register observations right after each interview this was not always possible given the sequencing of interviews and the fact that the team did not have access to a suitable space in the community where to do this.

physically (at which point the interviewers were instructed to interrupt the interview or change the subject to non-sensitive topics).

All interviewers that supported data collection had experience (yet to varying degree) with dealing with situations of gender-based violence through in research previous research they had engaged in and key principles of dealing with difficult situations were discussed during the team workshop prior to fieldwork. The multiple team sessions during field work also discussed those cases to not only ensure the individual responses were deemed adequate but also to ensure the interviewers' emotional well-being.

To avoid re-victimization of participants who had experienced violence, the interviewers reassured them about their right to stop the interview or take a break at any time. No current or ongoing cases of violence were mentioned by the interviewees: the episodes that emerged during interviews were past exposure to violence with victims meanwhile being safe from the perpetrators. After the interviews, interviewers gave support and advice, reassuring the interviewee, and clearly signaling empathy. Furthermore, several (though not all) of the participants who shared victimization experiences had been recruited from an NGO which provides psycho-social support to them. The fieldwork team used the opportunity to check in on these sensitive issues and how to best deal with them during the regular team meetings while field work was ongoing.

Transcripts and audios were only stored by myself (and now shared confidentially with the reviewing Committee) and the information in the analysis does not associate citations or findings with any specific name. The citations in the main body of the text, the annexed data matrix, and the summary stories will use unique identifiers.

## Reflections on limitations of the study

The study elaborates on past events. The retrospective character of the study may have implications for truthfulness of responses and open ways for interviewees' responses to be influenced by what they experienced between the pregnancy/birth and the present. Also, the study was conducted only in Managua and around Managua (thus in urbanized areas). This means that the findings cannot necessarily be transferred to rural areas of Nicaragua, a point that was emphasized by several key informants.

The study has several limitations related to recruitment. Ideally, a larger number of middle-class women with pregnancy experience would have taken part in the study. However, recruitment of that group turned out to be particularly difficult, as previously noted. Since recruitment of this group was done through personal contacts of the local team, a bias for young women from rather liberal schools and networks may have resulted. This has implications for several key areas the study touched upon during the interviews.

Fathers of children born to adolescent mothers were also difficult to recruit. Fathers that were approached in Ciudad Sandino often declined participation, referring to busy work schedules and a need to rest on weekends. Thus, the local team turned to an NGO working with young men to facilitate recruitment. Given these participants' potential exposure to interventions by this NGO, there is potential for a bias in the answers of these men. Unfortunately it was not possible retroactively to track back the precise extent to which male research participants had been exposed to the activities offered by the NGO. When afterwards reaching out to the contact person in the NGO, he was not able to recall the exact details and whether and how the research participants had been participants in any and which type of activities provided by the NGO.

Some of the women in the group of poor with pregnancy experience were recruited through an NGO that works with adolescent girls in crisis such as violence, neglect, and drug abuse. This potentially led to an oversampling of women with histories of abuse. However, cautious analysis can prevent the drawing of false conclusions based on this sub-sample. And finally, as mentioned before, neither the poor nor the middle-class were entirely homogeneous groups but seemed to span across a range of status/income levels respectively. In case of the middle-class it is worthwhile mentioning that participants seemed to be mostly "upper-middle-class" given their access to studies abroad and other references made individually.

Beyond limitations in a strict sense, I would also like to discuss some reflections on the design and implementation of the study. First of all, my own role in the field work and possible implications of that role certainly deserve some discussion: "Qualitative inquiry is personal. (...) what brings you to an inquiry matters. Your background, experience, training skills, interpersonal competence, capacity for empathy, cross-cultural sensitivity, and how you, as a person, engage in fieldwork and analysis – these things undergird the credibility of your findings." (Patton, 2015, p. 5). Prior to conducting field work I had been professionally involved in working on gender issues for about seven years. In addition to my personal desire to support the goal of gender equality through my work, I arrived in Nicaragua five months pregnant with my first child. I was feeling strong empathy for the young women who had been facing different types of barriers towards fulfilling their aspirations and others who had successfully overcome such barriers. On the other hand, I believe that particularly among those with children the fact that I was showing the pregnancy clearly helped to gain their trust and increased their openness towards me. On the other hand though, the fact that I am a foreigner may have also had implications on their interviewing behavior such as a sense of distance between our realities for instance.

Furthermore, while I was conducting one interview with a male participant, I realized that the fact that I am a woman complicated the flow of the process in that case. There were several moments in the interview where I realized the interviewee did not feel completely at ease, or where he may have answered in what he expected to be the 'desirable' way – not necessarily reflecting fully his own experience (this was partially confirmed when afterwards listening to his wife who participated in the sample poor women with pregnancy experience). Another female

interviewer shared the same concerns and from thereon, the decision was made that the male team member would conduct all interviews with men.

Because the data was collected by five interviewers, different styles and priorities emerged in the transcripts and audios. Some interviewers tended to be more flexible, exploratory and free when following the emerging issues. Others stuck more closely to the interview guides. While in some cases the more flexible approach left out key information (such as mother's age at first child's birth), the stricter approach led to missed opportunities in terms of depth of information.

I realized that the interviews I conducted myself turned out to be much more valuable for the analysis compared to several of those I had not conducted myself. I realized that indeed the "researcher is the instrument of inquiry" (Patton, 2015, p. XIV). The opportunity to see, and feel through the process of the interview – to experience the context in which the interview is set, adds significant value to the analysis process.

"To understand fully the complexities of a situation, direct participation in and observation of the phenomenon of interest is a particularly fruitful method." (Patton, 2015, p. 27). While relatively short, my presence in the field and the chance to engage in field observation significantly added to the analysis process. At the same time, a more ethnographic approach to this study would have further enriched the endeavor. The young women interviewed drew on concepts, categories, stereotypes, narratives, and world views based in their communities. A more lasting exposure to these communities would have surely helped contextualize and understand these issues even more profoundly.

After finalization of the analysis, a reflection regarding the sample relates to its actual size: For some sub-samples (particularly poor/pregnant) the sample can be considered large for a qualitative study (see Patton, 2015, p. 258 and p. 314). At the same time, not all of the interviews were conducted with the same depth. Also, it turns out that some of the team members were more sold on structure compared to openness (to use the formerly established guiding principles for interview guide application again). These interviews in particular did not necessarily add much depth to answering the overall research questions which again emphasizes the idea that smaller samples for qualitative research – if well conducted – would have been absolutely feasible (if not preferable) without negative impacts on the depth of the analysis or the validity of the findings.

Finally, there are the limitations typical of any qualitative research. Qualitative research can never be an objective record of reality, but a way of expressing certain experiences. Research participants can select which events to present and how, while there are similar subjective matters in how and why a researcher selects which information to include and which to neglect. And finally, qualitative research cannot uncover causal relations such as quantitative analysis.

## Analysis

The analysis of the study followed the key strategies to be applied in qualitative inquiry as put forward in Patton 2015. Each interview was recorded and fully transcribed (note: the transcriptions were done by a local consultant). Since I did not conduct all the interviews myself, I first listened to all the audios as those may transport some additional meanings and nuances compared to the transcripts regarding atmosphere of the interview and emotions.

The analysis process was conducted in a circular approach: multiple rounds of reading the data, starting with an inductive perspective which served to identify themes, motives, patterns, and striking moments case by case through a deep immersion into each interview: “The mind-set that is critical in open inquiry is to expect the unexpected, look for it, and see where it leads you.” (Patton, 2015, p. 12). I worked from the principle of “unique case orientation” (Patton, 2015): Each case is considered unique and special. Thus, the first level of analysis is an exploration of each single case in-depth, aiming to capture details of each participant’s story. The very first step consisted in writing a summary of each interview which was useful since afterwards it facilitated the orientation among the data material given the relatively large number of interviews. During the first reading, passages that were somehow touching, striking, or moving, passages that contained something that puzzled me, were marked in color. This first level, case by case analysis was followed by a deductive reading during which hypotheses, generated from the first inductive readings were validated based on the material (Strauss, 2004, p. 441).

Context sensitivity was extremely important to analysis – context is critical to understanding qualitative data. Social, cultural, economic, political and historical context necessarily need to be taken into consideration during the analysis process. Key informant interviews were particularly useful to understand context and also to direct to literature from Nicaragua on the topic itself as well as on the political and historic background. “By context, I mean a setting – physical, geographic, temporal, historical, cultural, aesthetic – within which action takes place. Context becomes the framework, the reference point, the map, the ecological sphere; it is used to place people and action in time and space and as a resource for understanding what they say and do. The context is rich in clues for interpreting the experience of the actors in the setting. We have no idea how to decipher or decode an action, a gesture, a conversation, or an exclamation unless we see it embedded in context.” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 41).

During a first round of orientation in the data, the coding process was initiated in a very open way with the assignment of very broad codes to specific text passages to then more and more specific levels of detail. Initially, the codes were based on the main concepts put forward in the research instruments (for instance: family, education, love, sex etc.) – essentially what Patton (2015) calls: ‘first-cut coding’ (Patton, 2015, p. 553). During additional rounds of reading and analysis, more detailed levels of coding were introduced. I did not code the data in a particularly narrow way. According to Riessman: “Critical and illuminative contextual and structural elements



of a story can be lost when it is coded narrowly and reduced to bite-size units.” (Riessmann, 1993, p. 131). The coding process built the main foundation for the next, the interpretative phase when recurring regularities were examined “when meanings are extracted from the data, comparisons are made, creative frameworks for interpretation are constructed, conclusions are drawn, significance is determined, and, in some cases, theory is generated” (Patton, 2015, p. 555).

See below the final code list used during the readings through hand-coding:

#### Socio-economic context

- Religious institutions
- Religiosity
- Social interactions – friends and relatives
- Social interactions - neighborhood
- Teenage pregnancies among family/friends/neighborhood
- Migration experience

#### Family-relations

- Family harmony
- Family disruptions
- Family history
- Abuse

#### Father

- Relationship with own father
- Understanding/expectations of fathering

#### Relationship to father of the baby

- History of relationship
- Power relations
- Support provided by father of the baby – economic
- Support provided by father of the baby – emotional
- Expectations towards father of the baby

#### Mother

- Relationship with own mother
- Meanings attached to motherhood
- Motivation to becoming a mother
- Experience of mothering: Unpreparedness
- Experience of mothering: Changing priorities
- Experience of mothering: Putting order in one's life
- Experience of mothering: Sense of personal growth
- Experience of mothering: Giving up adolescence
- Experience of mothering: Pride
- Single-motherhood

## Daily routine

- Domestic tasks
- Social activities
- Educative activities
- Work

## Education

- Quality of schooling
- Meanings attached to education
- Pregnancy-related changes in education
- Sunday arrangements
- Educational aspirations

## Work

- Work experience
- Zona Franca
- Domestic (unpaid) work
- Under-age work experiences
- Economic pressure
- Meaning of work

## Aspirations

- Aspirations for self
- Aspirations for child
- Role models and examples
- Instruments/tools to implement aspirations

## Decision-making

- Autonomous decisions
- People influencing one's decisions
- (Lack of) control in decision-making

## Gender norms

- Females (shared in her context)
- Males (shared in her context)
- Own positioning to gender norms

## Pregnancy

- How it happened
- 'Union/marriage'
- Plan of past pregnancy
- Motivation for pregnancy
- Own first reaction to pregnancy
- Reactions to pregnancy others
- Plans for future pregnancy
- Support during pregnancy
- Consequences of pregnancy

#### Sexual information and knowledge

- Source of sexual information
- Quality of knowledge
- Facilitators of information
- Barriers to information

#### Sexual experience and contraception

- First sex
- Pleasure
- Contraceptive use
- Access to contraceptives

#### Abortion

- Consideration of abortion
- Facilitators abortion
- Barriers abortion

Finally, already during field work I started to produce (handwritten) memos and continued to do so when listening to the audios and reading the transcripts. They contain reflections on some of the most striking moments during field work, specific themes and passages and thus served already as a first step within the continuous process of data analysis. Memos serve the purpose to actively engage with one's data. This includes not only the connection between different interviews but also the development of first hypotheses, and possibly references of relevant literature.

“An analytic memo is a brief or extended narrative that documents the researcher's reflections and thinking processes about the data. These are not just descriptive summaries of data but attempts to synthesize them into higher level analytic meanings. They are first-draft self-reports,

of sorts about the study's phenomena and serve as the basis for more expanded and final reports.” (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014, p.96)

See below one example of such a memo.

*(Referring to the following text passage:)*<sup>133</sup>

*Miriam: ¿Y cuándo tenías relaciones tú no sabías lo que era, no? ¿Hablaste con él?*

*A.: Sí.*

*Miriam: ¿Y sobre qué hablaron?*

*A.: Él me dijo, y qué es, le digo yo. Entonces me dijo él, es una cosa común, la hacemos los hombres en las mujeres, me dice.*

*Miriam: ¿Los hombres en las mujeres?*

*A.: Sí. Entonces, me dice, es una cosa, me dice que, una cosa, cómo le dijera yo muy, se me olvida esto, una cosa pues que la hacemos. Ahora ya no pues, es como antes, la primera vez que no sabía, ahora sí, ya un poquito sé.*

A.'s sentence: 'Something that men do to women' when talking about her first sexual experience was striking. Reflects strongly the overall passivity of A.. Only 'active' behavior is the decision to trade herself against a new place to live (in order to escape her violent family context). In partner's home she fully depends on him – and she accepts whatever he tells her to do. She would not have any other home to live in or any other person to provide her with food. She would not be able to provide for herself.

At the same time, the sentence strongly illuminates the ownership over her body that her partner acquired through the trade she made. She passively accepts what he does to her. The words 'la hacemos los hombres en las mujeres' is shockingly direct about the male centered sexuality she is describing. She never refers to sex as something that she even had a word in – it is him who introduces her to sex but in a way that is completely owned and led and managed by him. She never refers to it as something she takes part in other than passively. Which actually is true for almost every single interview with poor women up to this point.

In parallel, based on the summary stories, the memos and a very first reading of the overall data, I put together a first outline of the key emerging themes from the data.

This initial analysis informed the organization of the data along selected themes in an Excel matrix. This served the basis to have a themes inventory and to facilitate a more structured the analysis: “Overall, the matrix is a tabular format that collects and arranges data for easy viewing in one place, permits detailed analysis, and sets the stage for later cross-case analysis with other comparable cases or sites.” (Miles, Huberman, Saldana 2014, p. 111)

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<sup>133</sup> This memo was retroactively anonymized to protect the confidentiality of the interviewee.

The excel sheet included the following thematic codes:

#### Gender norms and sexual behavior

- Social critique of female behavior
- Relationships in couple
- Emotional vulnerability of young women
- Sex as a resource
- Knowledge and information
- Condom rejection
- Good mother
- Expectations towards father

#### Education, aspirations, opportunities

- Role models
- Aspirations
- Dropping out of education
- Work and employment
- Zona Franca

#### Planning and decision-making

- Control in contraceptive use
- Acceptance – ‘it happened’
- Sex as an exit option
- Dependence from partner
- Motives for planned pregnancy
- Father pressures
- Abortion
- Postponing pregnancy
- Concept of adulthood

#### Consequences

- Less focus on oneself
- Positive outcomes
- Stigma and reactions of others
- Culpa/guilt
- Single motherhood
- Family support
- Father’s involvement

- Life goes on

I filled those for all participants based on the hand-based initial coding. Finally, the memo-writing, the coding and the data organization in themes supported the overall analysis and interpretation of the data. “Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but surely patterned world.” (Patton, 2015, p. 570). Analysis also included references to literature and key informant interviews as well as the validation conducted through the second round of key informant interviews during which some of the themes emerging from the data were deepened or validated and information on some contextual factors was deepened. After the analysis was written up, I hired a proofreader to review the draft for grammar and style and to fix formatting issues. After completing the write-up, I also benefited from discussions with colleagues, friends and family over the research findings and their implications.





## Annex 2: Translated quotations

Chapter 4	
<p>Interviewer: ¿Y por qué decidieron tener un niño tan joven?</p> <p>B: Porque yo quería y él quería... porque ya quería formar una familia... (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: And why did you decide to have a child at such young age?</p> <p>B: Because I wanted and he wanted ... because I already wanted to build a family ... (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>V: No, porque ahora yo quería salir embarazada, porque decía que me sentía sola, porque él se había cruzado a trabajar, yo quedo sola en el día, entonces tener un bebé es como estar acompañada, por ejemplo hacerle la pacha, estar chineándolo... (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>V: No, because now I wanted to get pregnant, because I said I felt lonely, because he had started to work, I stayed alone during the day, then having a baby was like being accompanied, for instance, making his bottle, cuddle him ... (woman, P / P)</p>
<p>M: Y él me decía – yo quiero que me tenga un niño, tenemelo- Hasta que me convenció. Entonces yo le dije -está bien, lo voy a tener. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>M: And he would tell me - I want you to have me a child, have one for me - Until he convinced me. Then I told him - it's fine, I'm going to have it. (woman, P / P)</p>
<p>I: Él ya no se protegía, yo si me ponía la inyección, él decía: “quiero una niña, quiero una niña”, pues él continuo.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Continuo?</p> <p>I: Si, entonces él decía que yo era una mala, que no lo quería y me dijo tantas cosas para que yo creyera en quedar embarazada solo. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>I: He no longer protected himself, I was still using the injection, he would say: "I want a girl, I want a girl", that's how he continued.</p> <p>Interviewer: He continued?</p> <p>I: Yes, then he said that I was a bad person, that I didn't love him and he told me so many things so that I would only believe in getting pregnant. (woman, NP/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Y cuándo piensas que sería una buena edad para tener un bebé? ¿Qué piensas?</p> <p>U: ¿Una edad?</p> <p>Interviewer: Si</p> <p>U: Pues, yo lo miro después de los 25, por lo menos quiero vivir sola, quiero saber qué es vivir completamente sola, quiero disfrutar mi</p>	<p>Interviewer: And when do you think it would be a good age to have a baby? What you think?</p> <p>U: An age?</p> <p>Interviewer: Yes</p> <p>U: Well, I would think after 25, at least I want to live by myself, I want to know what it is to live completely on my own, I want to enjoy my salary, I mean, if I want to buy a shirt for</p>

<p>salario, osea, si decir si me quiero comprar una camisa de mil dólares lo pueda hacer porque de mi dinero solo dependo yo, quiero sentir esa independencia y también prepararme, osea, imagínese que voy a una maestría, no me puedo ir a una maestría con un hijo y 2 años fuera del país a quién se lo voy a dejar, entonces no allá mejor después de los 25. (woman, MC/NP)</p>	<p>a thousand dollars I would be able to do it because it is only me depending on my money, I want to feel that independence and also prepare myself, I mean, imagine if I'm going to study a master's degree, I cannot go to a master's degree with a child and spend two years out of the country – with whom am I going to leave the child, so, then better after 25. (woman, MC/NP)</p>
<p>J: Porque...no quiero un bebé, porque primero no estoy preparada para tener un bebé, osea, ni económica ni emocionalmente nada, nada en ninguna circunstancia y además porque aun que se escuche feo la gente siempre te dice y yo lo veo porque conozco mujeres que han salido embarazada a mi edad que dicen que un niño es una bendición, pero yo creo que la bendición depende de la edad, por lo menos ahorita no miro que un niño sea una bendición porque yo quiero viajar, quiero conocer, ir y ver yo quiero hacer cosas que talvez un niño o una niña no me lo va a permitir, porque ya no pienso solo en mi sino en él o ella porque yo soy la que tiene que responder, entonces no quiero un bebé porque quiero vivir lo mío y ya después mi vida vivirla con él cuando este lista. (woman, MC/NP)</p>	<p>J: Because ... I do not want a baby, because first I am not prepared to have a baby, I mean, neither economically nor emotionally at all, not in any circumstance and also - even if it sounds ugly - people always tell you, and I see it because I know women who have been pregnant at my age who say that a child is a blessing, but I believe that the blessing depends on the age, at least right now I do not see a child as a blessing because I want to travel, I want to get to know things, go and see, I want to do things that maybe a child will not allow me to do, because I will no longer be thinking only about myself but about him or her because I will be the one who will have to respond, so I do not want a baby because I want to live my life and then after that I will live my life with the child when I am ready. (woman, MC/NP)</p>
<p>V: haber cumplido los sueños o las metas que tengo, porque no quiero que un hijo se interponga en eso. (woman, MC/NP)</p>	<p>V: having fulfilled the dreams or the goals that I have, because I do not want a child to get in the way. (woman, MC/NP)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Te apoyó? E: No. Mi mamá quería que me hiciera un aborto. Interviewer: ¿Y tú querías un aborto?</p>	<p>Interviewer: Did she support you? E: No. My mom wanted me to have an abortion. Interviewer: And did you want an abortion? E: No, because I told her I did not want to get pregnant, but I do not want to abort</p>

E: No, porque yo le decía yo no quería salir embarazada, pero tampoco quiero abortar, porque mi conciencia nunca iba a estar tranquila. (woman, P/P)	either, because my conscience would never be calm. (woman, P/P)
J: Después de eso que la bandida le gustaba socarse la panza, llegó un momento que quería botar a la niña, quería abortar, hizo un poco de cosas que cuando mi hija nació, nació con problemas, por ese mismo motivo de lo que ella quería hacer. (father)	J: After that this gangster (note: the mother of the baby) liked to hit her belly, it got to a point in which she wanted to get rid of the girl, she wanted to have an abortion, she did a few things so that when my daughter was born, she was born with problems, because of these things that she (note: the mother) wanted to do. (father)
H: Fui mi decisión empezar a tener relaciones promiscuas y no iba a abortar cuando yo tuve la libertad de decidir tener relaciones sexuales. No es algo correcto. Tampoco él me lo sugirió, mi papá si me lo sugirió. (woman, MC/P)	H: It was my decision to start having promiscuous relationships and I was not going to have an abortion when at the same time I had the freedom to decide to have sex. It is not right. He did not suggest it to me either, my dad suggested it. (woman, MC / P)
Interviewer: ¿Y sabías vos a los 15 años de algún método anticonceptivo, del uso del condón?  A: Pues yo escuchaba, no sabía, solamente escuchaba que había preservativos, pero no sabía ni cómo ni dónde comprarlos, ni cómo lo iba a usar... Nunca nos protegimos porque no tenía yo ese conocimiento. (woman, P/P)	Interviewer: And at the age of 15 did you know any method of contraception, did you know about condom use?  A: Well, I listened, I did not know, I just heard there were condoms, but I did not know how or where to buy them, or how I was going to use them ... We never protected ourselves because I did not have that knowledge. (woman, P / P)
Interviewer: ¿En algún momento hablaron sobre un embarazo?  B: Si como 3 veces le dije que no. Y el dijo que como ya habíamos tenido relaciones más antes, que mejor no, pero que si quedaba embarazada que él iba asumirlo. (woman, P/P)	Interviewer: Did you ever talk about a pregnancy?  B: Yes, like three times I told him that no. And he said that since we had already had intercourse before, that better not to, but that if I was gonna get pregnant that he would assume it. (woman, P/P)
Interviewer: ¿Por qué?	Interviewer: Why?  D: Because ... partly, because the injections were draining me. They were draining me but

<p>D: Porque... una parte, porque las inyecciones me estaban fregando. Me estaban fregando pero en otra parte, porque si salía embarazada, salía. Eso era. (Risas)</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Pero no querías? Fue así, que querías, querías un bebé.</p> <p>D: Sí salía, pues bienvenido. Si no salgo, pues no salgo. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>on the other hand, because if I would get pregnant, I would get pregnant. That was it. (Laughter)</p> <p>Interviewer: But did you not want that? It was like that, that you wanted, you wanted a baby.</p> <p>D: Yes, if it would happen, well, welcome. If I would not get pregnant, I would not get pregnant. (woman, P / P)</p>
<p>S: Sí, hemos hablado (Note: about the possibility of having a child), él piensa que no es el momento, que si se da bueno... (woman P/NP)</p>	<p>S: Yes, we have spoken (Note: about the possibility of having a child), he thinks that it is not the moment, but if it happens, well ... (woman, P/NP)</p>
<p>C: No. En realidad. (Risas) Verlo así como decisión, decisión no. Porque una decisión, la entiendo como algo que vos lo pensés primero y llegás, sí, lo voy hacer o no lo voy hacer. Fue algo, así como espontaneo. Ni él lo pensó, ni yo lo pensé. Cuando mire, ya estábamos... (Risas) Sí. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>C: No. Actually. (Laughter) Seeing this as a decision, a decision, no. Because a decision, I understand it as something that you think about first and then you get to 'yes, I will do it' or 'I will not do it'. It was something, like spontaneous. Neither he thought about it, nor did I. When I looked, we were already ... (Laughter) Yes. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿No tenías ideas de anticonceptivos?</p> <p>O: Pues sí, de hecho fue algo así de... no sé, a veces los jóvenes o los adolescentes tendemos a ser irresponsables. Creemos que somos inmortales y que nada nos va a pasar y dejamos todo hacia un lado. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Did you not have an idea about contraceptives?</p> <p>O: Yes, in fact it was something like that ... I do not know, sometimes young people or teenagers we tend to be irresponsible. We believe that we are immortal and that nothing will happen to us and we leave everything aside. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Y la relación sexual con la mamá de tu hija cómo fue, cómo comenzó?</p> <p>J: Besitos, abrazos, una vez la cité que llegara a la casa y allí se dieron los hechos.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Y utilizaste en algún momento anticonceptivos?</p> <p>J: No, nada de eso usé, nada, nada, nada, nada, pura piel, pura carne (risas)</p>	<p>Interviewer: And what about the sexual relationship with your daughter's mom, how did it start?</p> <p>J: Kisses, hugs, once I told her to come to the house and there the things happened.</p> <p>Interviewer: And did you use contraceptives at any time?</p> <p>J: No, I used nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, pure skin, pure flesh</p>

<p>Interviewer: ¿No utilizaron eso por desconocimiento, o por decisión?</p> <p>J: Por decisión. (father)</p>	<p>(laughs)</p> <p>Interviewer: Did you not use any because you didn't know, or by decision?</p> <p>J: By decision. (father)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Y pensaron en la posibilidad de quedar embarazada?</p> <p>K: Usted sabe que a veces, cuando está en el momento a uno no le importa, sí lo pensamos, pero ya en el.... No hay, no hay, ni modo. (father)</p>	<p>Interviewer: And did you think about the possibility of getting pregnant?</p> <p>K: You know that sometimes, when you are in the moment you do not care, yes, we thought about it, but already in the ... There is no, there is no, anyways. (father)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Qué edad tenías cuando eso?</p> <p>Y: 15 años... Si como le digo: yo sabía, pero es que yo vivía la vida por vivirla, yo escuchaba, por aquí me entraba y por aquí me salía... Y a él también... Me imagino que a él también, porque él tampoco se ponía a pensar, me decía: "mirá, vamos a ir a planificar", nada, nada, solo vivíamos la vida como nos venía viniendo...</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Y así salió la otra criatura?</p> <p>Y: Así salió el otro niño, lo tuve a los 16 o 17, 16 creo... creo que a los 16, porque el niño ahorita tiene 11 años.</p> <p>Interviewer: Y los otros dos niños ¿son del mismo papá?</p> <p>Y: No, ya son de otro. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: How old were you then?</p> <p>Y: 15 years old ... Yes how should I tell you: I knew, but I lived my life to live it, I listened, it came in here and there it came out ... And with him too ... I imagine it was the same for him, because he did not think about it either, he told me: "Look, let's go use contraceptives", nothing, nothing, we only lived life as it was happening ...</p> <p>Interviewer: And this is how you had the other child?</p> <p>Y: That's how I had the other child, I was 16 or 17, 16 I think ... I think I was 16, because the child right now is 11 years old.</p> <p>Interviewer: And the other two children are from the same dad?</p> <p>Y: No, they are from someone else. (woman, P / P)</p>
<p>E: Fue una noche que yo me quedé en la calle. Amanecí en la calle, mi mamá se había ido a Catarina y mi hermana le dijo a mi mamá que yo había amanecido con este novio y ella me empezó a decir que si yo había tenido algo con él que me fuera de la casa, que me fuera con él (LLANTO).</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Te fuiste de la casa?</p> <p>E: Sí, yo me fui de la casa, porque ella no me creyó (LLANTO), entonces él llegó a hablar</p>	<p>E: It was one night that I stayed on the street. I woke up in the street, my mom had gone to Catarina and my sister told my mom that I had been up with this boyfriend and she started telling me that if I had had something with him that I would have to leave the house, that I would have to go with him (cries).</p> <p>Interviewer: Did you leave the house?</p> <p>E: Yes, I left the house, because she did not</p>

<p>con ella para explicarle que nada había pasado, entonces ella le dijo que no, ella se cerró en que habíamos tener relaciones, entonces me fui con él.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Era la única opción que tenías?</p> <p>E: Sí. Él me llevó y me dijo que iba a intentar a hablar con mi mamá, pero no cambió su posición. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>believe me (cries), then he came to talk to her to explain that nothing had happened, then she said no, she insisted on that thing that we had had sex, so I went with him.</p> <p>Interviewer: Was it the only option you had?</p> <p>E: Yes. He took me and told me he was going to try to talk to my mom, but he did not change his position. (woman, P / P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: Y has hablado con tu compañero de eso? Porque siempre hay un riesgo, ¿cómo ha reaccionado él?</p> <p>N: Sí he hablado, ha reaccionado normal, aunque ahorita tanto él como yo no queremos bebé, pero si llega a pasar pues es cosa de dios, él sabe por qué pasan las cosas. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: And have you talked to your partner about that? Because there is always a risk, how did he react?</p> <p>N: Yes, I have spoken with him, he reacted normally, although now both he and I do not want a baby, but if it happens then it is something from God, he knows why things happen. (woman, NP / P)</p>
<p>E: Noooo. Yo decía –si quedo, quedo, ideay. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>E: Noooo. I said, if I get pregnant, I get pregnant, well well. (woman, NP / P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Cómo lo decidiste de tener relaciones? ¿Lo decidieron juntos?</p> <p>H: Fue una decisión impulsada por las hormonas de la edad y las circunstancias, porque no me puse a pensar que lo iba a hacer. Fue algo que pasó. (woman, MC/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: How did you decide to have sex? Did you decide together?</p> <p>H: It was a decision driven by the hormones of that age and the circumstances, because I did not stop to think I was going to do it. It was something that happened. (woman, MC / P)</p>
<p><b>Chapter 6</b></p>	
<p>Interviewer: ¿Buscaste más información para tener esa sexualidad responsable?</p> <p>Z: Me daba como... era una niña muy tímida y me daba como pena, porque siempre que me acercaba a alguien y le quería hacer una pregunta me miraba como con otros ojos, entonces me daba como cierto temor. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Have you looked for more information to have a responsible sexuality?</p> <p>Z: I was like ... I was a very shy girl and I was sort of ashamed, because whenever I approached someone and I wanted to ask a question people would look at me with other eyes, that made be somewhat afraid. (woman, P/P)</p>

<p>Interviewer: ¿Vos sentís que tener información sobre sexo es fácil o es difícil para vos conseguirla?</p> <p>O: Por el momento... bueno, ahora ya no, porque como ya sé, ya le puedo preguntar a una enfermera...</p> <p>Interviewer: Pero cuando no sabías, ¿creés que para una joven adolescente es difícil conseguir información?</p> <p>O: Sí, porque no quería que la gente tal vez pensara que andaba ya de loca, o si le pregunto a alguien, tal vez la niña quiere algo con alguien, no sé. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Do you feel that having information about sex is easy or is it difficult for you to get it?</p> <p>O: At the moment ... well, now not anymore, because as I already know, I can ask a nurse ...</p> <p>Interviewer: But when you did not know, do you think that for a young teenager it is difficult to get information?</p> <p>O: Yes, because I did not want people to think that I was already going crazy, or if I ask someone, they would think maybe the girl wants something with someone, I do not know. (woman, NP/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Y por qué no buscaste más información, en la escuela no te hablaron de sexualidad?</p> <p>O: Cómo no, pero no abiertamente, quién sabe... una vez me acuerdo que cuando estaba en primer año estaban hablando sobre eso unas chavalas, estaban hablando sobre los condones, las pastillas, cosas para protegerse, y le estaba contando a mi mama y dice: "qué barbaridad, ya ni en los colegios respetan hablar de eso", entonces nunca me dio por preguntarle algo a ella porque me daba pena... (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: And why did you not look for more information, at school they did not tell you about sexuality?</p> <p>O: Of course, but not openly, who knows ... once I remember that when I was in the first year some girls were talking about it, they were talking about condoms, pills, things to protect themselves, and I was telling my mom and she says: "What a barbarity, not even in the schools they have the respect to not talk about it", then I never dared to ask her anything because I felt ashamed ... (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>D: Bueno, a mi siempre me ha gustado leer bastante, siempre me ha gustado leer eso de las infecciones de transmisión sexual, las enfermedades y todo eso, lo que es también acerca de partos y embarazos, las complicaciones y lo que se ve en el embarazo. En el colegio hablamos bastante de eso, incluso cuando yo estaba en tercer año Tania todavía estaba estudiando y ella andaba bastante en eso con otro muchacho y también daban charlas, yo creo que tuve dos ocasiones que ella habló cerca de la</p>	<p>D: Well, I've always liked to read a lot, I've always liked to read about sexually transmitted infections, diseases and all that, also about births and pregnancies, complications and what happens in the pregnancy. At school we talked a lot about that, even when I was in third year, Tania was still studying and she was quite into it with another boy and they also gave talks, I think there were two occasions in which she talked about diseases and all that. I was involved in the Sandinista Youth and four times they held</p>

<p>enfermedades y todo eso. Yo anduve metida en lo que es la Juventud Sandinista y en cuatro ocasiones nos dieron charlas a las jóvenes, hombres y mujeres, acerca de los embarazos no deseados, los métodos anticonceptivos y todo eso, siempre me ha gustado estar al pendiente porque pensé algún día yo voy a tener relaciones con un hombre y en ese momento quiero saber qué es bueno tomar para mi organismo, porque las pastillas a veces no funcionan en cualquier persona, el organismo de cada quien es diferente, entonces me gustaba leer bastante y las charlas que nos daban. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>these talks to us youth, women and men, about unwanted pregnancies, contraceptive methods and all that, I always liked to be on the lookout because I thought someday I am going to have sex with a man and at that moment I want to know what is good for my body, because the pills sometimes do not work for anyone, the organism of each one is different, so I liked to read a lot and the talks they gave us. (woman, NP/P).</p>
<p>L: Eeeeh, bueno, la verdad, obviamente cuando tenía como entre 4 y 5 años le pregunté de donde salen los niños, verdad, entonces mi mamá hizo lo que una mamá tuani hace me compró un libro, verdad, que se llamaba educación sexual para niños de 3 a 6 años, un libro bestial, osea, era muy lindo, muy franco y muy adecuado para la edad. (...) Entonces mis conocimientos sobre la sexualidad después eran clínicos Interviewer: (Risas) L: Entonces cuando tenía como 8 años, yo sabía que era un clítoris, no sabía muy bien por qué era tuani, pero sabía que existía. Interviewer: (..) Y el feminismo me ha ayudado un montón a darme cuenta de otras cosas, pero en ese sentido mi mamá siempre fue como bien abierta al tipo de preguntas que yo hacía cuando yo tenía como 8 años. Le pregunté que era un condón después de que estamos en el carro y escuchamos una viñeta de condones Vive, entonces yo ¿Qué es un condón?, entonces mi papá incomodísimo por él es de otra escuela, pero</p>	<p>L: Eeeeh, well, the truth, obviously when I was between 4 and 5 years old I asked her where the children came from, right, so my mom did what a cool mom does, she bought me a book, right, which was called sex education for children from 3 to 6 years, an incredible book, I mean, it was very beautiful, very frank and very suitable for the age. (...) Then my knowledge about sexuality afterwards was clinical Interviewer: (Laughter) L: So, when I was about 8 years old, I knew what a clitoris is, I did not know very well why it was cool, but I knew it existed. Interviewer: (..) And feminism has helped me a lot to realize other things, but in that sense my mom was always very open to the kind of questions I asked when I was about 8 years old. I asked her what a condom was after we were in the car and we had heard an advertisement of 'Vive' condoms. So me: What is a condom? Then my dad was very uncomfortable because he is from a different time, but my mom has always been very open and easy with all those things. Then my mom</p>



<p>mi mamá siempre ha sido muy abierta y tranquila con todas esas cosas. Entonces mi mamá me explicó en ese momento de que a veces las personas no tienen relaciones sexuales para reproducirse, sino porque es tuani y les gusta, entonces en ese momento yo no podía pensar por qué algo tan utilitario le podía gustar a alguien, pero ella me dijo entonces que bueno, que ese era un dispositivo que el hombre se ponía en el pene para tener relaciones sexuales y que la mujer no quedara embarazada y entonces esa fue como mi introducción a los métodos anticonceptivos. (woman, NP/MC)</p>	<p>explained to me at that moment that sometimes people do not have sex to reproduce, but because it is cool and they like it. Then in that moment I could not think why someone may enjoy something so utilitarian, but she told me then, well, that this was a device that the man puts on his penis to have sex and so that the woman does not get pregnant and then that was like my introduction to contraceptive methods. (woman, NP/MC)</p>
<p>Y: Si cambia el contexto en otros tipos de personas, en zonas rurales, otros colegios. Por ejemplo mi prima me contaba, que ella estudio en León en el Pureza de María que ahí nunca tocaron en toda la colegiatura un tema de sexualidad, un tema de protección y que desfilaban panzonas como contratadas, en mi colegio se tocaba siempre el tema de sexualidad, muy abierto, muy claro y en la historia del colegio ha habido como dos panzonas nada más. Entonces qué te puedo decir. Yo veo muy bien que sea abierto este tema, pero el acceso depende de tu contexto. (woman, MC/NP)</p>	<p>Y: Yes, the context changes when talking to other types of people, or in rural areas, or in other schools. For example, my cousin told me that she studied in León in the Purity of Mary that there they never touched a sexuality issue, or a topic of protection in the entire school and then they paraded with bellies as if they had been hired to be there, in my school the topic of sexuality was treated very openly, very clearly and in the history of the school there have been like two pregnant women nothing more. So, what can I tell you? I think it is good to treat the issue openly, but the access depends on your context. (woman, MC/NP)</p>
<p>Y: ... por un oído entra y por el otro sale, cuando tiene ese..... nada se le queda a uno, nada, uno sigue en lo mismo, uno escucha y todo, pero sigue en lo mismo. Allí fue donde salí embarazada de la niña. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Y: ...in one ear it enters and it comes out of the other, when you have this... One does not keep anything, nothing, one just remains in the same, one listens and everything, but one continues in the same. That's when I got pregnant with the girl. (woman, P / P)</p>
<p><b>Chapter 7</b></p>	

<p>Interviewer: ¿Por qué fue él quien trajo las pastillas? En vez de ir a... ¿Hay centros de salud?</p> <p>I: Sí. Sí. Bueno. Primero, porque yo ir a un centro de salud y que me mirara gente conocida que andaba buscando métodos de embarazo le iban a decir a mi mamá y iba ser problema. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Why was it him who brought the pills? Instead of going to ... Are there health centers?</p> <p>I: Yes. Yes. Well. First, because if I went to a health center and people that know me would see that I am looking for contraceptives they would tell my mom and that would be a problem. (woman, P / P)</p>
<p>F: Bueno, nos enseñan [her parents] que si no estoy lista par el matrimonio no estoy lista para tener novio, para entablar una relación tengo que estar listo para eso. (woman, P/NP)</p>	<p>F: Well, they [her parents] teach us that if I'm not ready for marriage I'm not ready to have a boyfriend, to start a relationship I have to be ready for that. (woman, P/NP)</p>
<p>Interviewer: Conoce usted a personas cercanas que se quedaron embarazadas o papas antes de los 19 anos de edad</p> <p>H: Si.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Por qué se embarazaron?</p> <p>H: Tal vez porque eran más vagas que yo. Hay una que le pasó una jugada. Ella era vaga, más que yo. Iba a las fiestas de noche. Ya después con el tiempo nos fuimos dando cuenta que estaba embarazada y yo le preguntaba – ¿ya te casaste?- cuando la miro con la barriga. No, me dice –estoy embarazada-, -¿y el papá?-, -es que no sé de quien es-. Al chavalo con el que andaba le dijo que era de él, pero él no le creyó. Ahora está trabajando para sacar adelante a su niño. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Do you know people close to you who became pregnant or parents before 19 years of age?</p> <p>H: Yes.</p> <p>Interviewer: Why did they get pregnant?</p> <p>H: Maybe because they slacked off more than I did. There is one who really got into some mess. She was a bit of a slacker, more than me. She went to parties at night. Later, with time, we realized that she was pregnant and I asked her - did you get married? - when I look at her with the belly. No, she tells me - I'm pregnant-, -and the dad? -, -I do not know who he is-. She told the boy she was going out with, but he did not believe that it was his. Now she is working to get her child ahead. (woman, P / P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Y cómo decidiste a tener relaciones?</p> <p>F: Fue algo duro, pues porque tenía miedo de perder mi virginidad.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Por qué tenías miedo?</p>	<p>Interviewer: And how did you decide to have sex?</p> <p>F: It was hard, because I was afraid of losing my virginity.</p> <p>Interviewer: Why were you afraid?</p> <p>F: Because I thought that was the most valuable thing that I had. It is the most</p>

<p>F: Porque yo pensaba que eso era lo más valioso que yo tenía. Es lo más valioso que tiene una adolescente y cuando uno ya se llega a casar ya lo comparte; igual a la pareja que lo sepa hacer porque eso duele. Duele cuando uno está teniendo relaciones, perdiendo su virginidad. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>valuable thing that an adolescent girl has and when one already gets to marry, one shares it; but also important that the partner knows what he's doing because that hurts. It hurts when you are having sex, when you are losing your virginity. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Qué tipo de cosas hacen las mujeres que son muy criticadas?, ¿hay cosas que mujeres en tu comunidad hace que la comunidad empiece a hablar mal?</p> <p>K: Si, yo creo que es bastante parecido a nivel municipal o a nivel de mi barrio, es lo típico pues que una chavala si ya tiene un novio es porque es loca, es porque ya quiere, pues decirle cosas muy despectivas por ejemplo –ah es que le pica- en referencia a la vulva, que ya quiere tener relaciones sexuales y siempre para restar la responsabilidad que tienen los adolescentes y los hombres pues, los chavalos con respecto a la sexualidad irresponsable que tienen inclusive las parejas porque muchas cosas.... Las chavalas se van de sus casas, aquí les decimos que se van, planifican con el novio, o el enamorado, escaparse a escondindas, entonces siempre la responsable de eso, la loca, la que lo estaba presionando era la chavala. Inclusive, hay un dicho que mucho se usa que dice “amarra tus gallinas que mis gallos andan sueltos.” Eso significa que siempre somos las mujeres las que debemos darnos a respetar, cuidarnos, dicen que nosotras decimos hasta dónde llegan los hombres. Entonces inclusive, si hay alguna chavala violada, una mujer violada, algún niño abusado sexualmente, es que dicen, seguramente ella provocó, o ella dio lugar a que eso pasara. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: What kind of things do women do that are highly criticized? Are there things that women do in your community that the community starts talking about badly?</p> <p>K: Yes, I think it's pretty similar at the municipal level or at my neighborhood level, it's typical, because a girl who already has a boyfriend that's because she's crazy, that's because she already wants it, so they're saying very derogatory things, for example – she is in heat down there -in reference to the vagina, that she already wants to have sex and always downplaying responsibility that adolescent boys and men have, so, kids say this with respect to the irresponsible sexuality that even couples have because of many things ... The girls leave their homes, here we say they leave, they plan with the boyfriend, or the lover, to escape secretly, then always the responsible one for that is the girl the crazy one, the one who was pushing him was the girl. Even, there is a saying that is widely used that says "tie your chickens since my roosters are running loose." That means that it is always us women who have to make ourselves respected, who have to take care of ourselves, they say that we say how far men can go. So even if there is a raped girl, a raped woman, a sexually abused child, they say, she probably provoked it, or she let it happen. (woman, P/P)</p>

<p>Interviewer: ¿Y cuándo tenías relaciones tú no sabías lo que era, no? ¿Hablaste con él?</p> <p>A: Sí.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Y sobre qué hablaron?</p> <p>A: Él me dijo, y qué es, le digo yo. Entonces me dijo él, es una cosa común, la hacemos los hombres en las mujeres, me dice.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Los hombres en las mujeres?</p> <p>A: Sí. Entonces, me dice, es una cosa, me dice que, una cosa, cómo le dijera yo muy, se me olvida esto, una cosa pues que la hacemos. Ahora ya no pues, es como antes, la primera vez que no sabía, ahora sí, ya un poquito sé. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: And when you had intercourse you did not know what it was, right? Did you speak with him?</p> <p>A: Yes.</p> <p>Interviewer: And what did you talk about?</p> <p>A: He told me, and what is it, I asked him. Then he told me, it's a common thing, we men do this to women, he says.</p> <p>Interviewer: Men do this to women?</p> <p>A: Yes. Then, he tells me, it is a thing, he tells me that, a thing, how did I just say? I forget this, well a thing that we do. Now well, it is not anymore like before, the first time I did not know, now yes, I already know a little bit. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Cómo decidieron vos y tu pareja tener relaciones sexuales?</p> <p>P: Fue una decisión mutua.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Y previnieron un posible embarazo?</p> <p>P: Sí, yo tuve que tomar pastillas, las fui a buscar a la farmacia. (woman, P/NP)</p>	<p>Interviewer: How did you and your partner decide to have sex?</p> <p>P: It was a mutual decision.</p> <p>Interviewer: And did you prevent a possible pregnancy?</p> <p>P: Yes, I had to take pills, I got them at the pharmacy. (woman, P/NP)</p>
<p>D: Yo creo que si, porque cuando yo estuve con él yo siempre le dije yo no quiero quedar embarazada, así que vemos qué hacemos, hablamos de cómo me iba a cuidar, que si voy a beber pastillas, o me voy a inyectar o vas a usar preservativo, que para mi es lo mejor le dije yo a él verdad, se molestó un poco porque “no que a mi no me gusta así con condón, no me gusta”, pero yo le dije yo nunca he estado con nadie, él tiene bastante tatuaje entonces a mi me daba un poco de temor con tantas cosas del VIH, que con sangre y todo eso, siempre le dije que para mi es lo mejor que uses preservativo, porque unas pastillas me previenen un embarazo si</p>	<p>D: I think so, because when I was with him I always told him I do not want to get pregnant, so we see what we do, we talked about how I was going to take care of myself, if I was going to take the pill, or if I was going to inject or if you are going to use a condom, which for me is the best I told him, he got a bit upset because "I do not like it with a condom, I do not like it", but I told him I've never been with anyone, he has a lot of tattoos so I was a bit afraid with all these things about HIV, that with blood and all that, I always told him that for me it is the best if he uses a condom, because some pills prevent a pregnancy if at all because</p>

<p>acaso porque algunas veces las pastillas fallan, pero no me va a cuidar del VIH, vos no sabes si lo tenés porque nunca te has echo una prueba, así que me dan un poco de temor y se molestó un poco cuando le dije eso “vos que crees que yo aquí y allá y no sé qué” y me empezó a decir, no le dije yo es lo mejor, para mi es lo mejor.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Luego insististe?</p> <p>D: Si, insistí, insistí y él bueno está bien, qué no sé, claro y él por estar conmigo para donde agarraba (risas) y este siempre que estuvimos juntos usó preservativo, (...) Entonces a mi me daba miedo, porque yo vivo en la casa y no me conocen novio y que salga embarazada, no y bueno y de quién y si se daban cuenta, siempre le dije a él eso y total que al final de cuentas no me decía nada de que él usara preservativo.</p> <p>Interviewer: Lo educaste.</p> <p>D: Lo eduqué (risas), exacto. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>sometimes the pills fail, but they are not going to take care of HIV, you do not know if you have it because you've never done a test, so I get a little scared and he got a bit upset when I said that "what do you think that I am here and there and I do not know what" and he started to tell me, I did not tell him that it was the best, that it was best for me.</p> <p>Interviewer: Then you insisted?</p> <p>D: Yes, I insisted, I insisted and then he, well fine, I do not know, of course, and to be with me, whatever it would take him I guess (laughs) and whenever we were together he used a condom, (...) So I was afraid, because I live in their house and they do not know my boyfriend and if I get pregnant, no and well from whom and if they realized, I always told him that and in the end he did not tell me anything about him using condoms.</p> <p>Interviewer: You educated him.</p> <p>D: I educated him (laughs), exactly. (woman, NP/P)</p>
<p>U: Pues, yo creo que siempre he tenido la mentalidad de que si vas a empezar a tener relaciones sexuales tenés que ser madura o maduro, pero en el sentido que tenés que sabes lo que conlleva “coger” por decirlo así; si vas a coger sabes que conlleva, osea, conlleva pues que podes salir embarazada entonces tenés que empezar a beber anticonceptivos, si vas a beber anticonceptivos o si él va usar condón, osea, todo la planificación y también creo que lo emocional sentirte bastante segura de qué es lo que queres y que con la persona con quien lo vas a hacer es la indicada o que te sientas bien con él, es importante ser madura</p>	<p>U: Well, I think I've always had the mentality that if you're going to start having sex you have to be mature (note: uses term in female and male form) , but in the sense that you have to know what it means to "fuck" so to speak; If you are going to fuck you know what it means, that means that you can get pregnant so you have to start taking contraceptives, either you are going to take contraceptives or he is going to use condoms, I mean, all the planning and I also think that emotionally you should feel quite secure that this is what you want and that it is the person with whom you are going to do it is the right one and that you feel good with him, it is important to be emotionally mature so that</p>

emocionalmente para poderlo afrontar y no tener problemas después. (woman, MC/NP)	you can face it and not have problems later. (woman, MC / NP)
<p>J: Ahorita, nuestra meta es querer comprar nuestra casa para optar a tener algo propio y así irnos guiando y superando en nuestro hogar. Este, querer comprar nuestras cosas juntos. Yo por eso estoy accediendo a trabajar porque yo necesito mi ingreso como mujer. Necesito mi ingreso, necesito para pagar mi universidad o las cosas del bebé. Porque mi mamá lo que nos ha enseñado es no siempre procurar a lo que el varón te dé, sino que uno como mujer se tiene que superar sola. (...) Y en sí, en mi futuro, quiero optar a comprar mi casa para formar mi hogar. Tener una cuenta de ahorro por cualquier cosa. Siempre comprar mis cosas, lo que haga falta en mi casa. Y así irme superando. Ayudar a mis padres, porque ellos han sido una gran herramienta para mí. Y así pienso yo en mi futuro. (Risas)</p>	<p>J: Right now, our goal is to want to buy our house so we can have something of our own and thus bettering ourselves. So, we want to buy our things together. That's why I'm agreeing to work because I need my income as a woman. I need my income, I need to pay for my university or the things of the baby. Because my mother what she has taught us is not always to look for what a man gives you, but that a woman has to overcome herself. (...) And in itself, in my future, I want to choose to buy my house to build my home. Have a savings account for if something happens. Always buy my things, whatever is needed in my house. And so, improving myself. Helping my parents, because they have been a great support for me. And that's how I think about my future. (Laughter) (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>G: Ahh, este, es que él me dijo pues, este, mira, ¿tú quieres tener relaciones conmigo? Y yo le dije que no. Claro, yo no, le dije mientras usted no me lleve yo no voy a tener relaciones con usted.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Antes de que te fueras con él?</p> <p>G: Sí, antes. (...) ¡No! Si tu quieres hacerme el daño, ¡llévame! (Risas) le digo porque no, no es así. Claro que hay chavalas que piensan diferente. Sí, me vale, dicen: mi mama me va a mantener, ya metí las patas la primer vez y mi mama ni cuenta se da y eso no fue así, yo le dije a él que si él quería tener alguna relación conmigo que me llevara primero y así fue. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>G: Ahh, this, is that he told me then, this, look, do you want to have sex with me? And I said no. Of course, I did not, I told him as long as you do not take me with you, I will not have intercourse with you.</p> <p>Interviewer: Before you left with him?</p> <p>G: Yes, before. (...) No! If you want to do me the harm, take me! (Laughter) I tell him, because no, it's not like that. Of course, there are girls who think differently. Yes, I don't care, they say: my mom is going to maintain me, I already got myself into trouble the first time and my mom does not even notice and that was not the case, I told him that if he wanted to have any relationship with me that he would have to take me first and so it was. (woman, P/P)</p>

<p>M: Pero cuando el me llevó a su casa, el no me llevó como su pareja (llora la entrevistada), el me llevo como empleada.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Con quién vivía él?</p> <p>M: Con la mamá y sus niños</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Te tocaba hacer las cosas de la casa?</p> <p>M: Si. Yo sentía que no tenía otra salida, porque donde mi abuelita, yo no quería volver, por mis tíos. Mi papá no quería hacerse cargo de mí porque no tenía a donde vivir. Y ahí al Sauce no me quería ir, porque yo sabía que ahí me iba a ir peor. Y tenía miedo de que le pasara algo a la niña. No conocía a nadie, nunca había ido. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>M: But when he took me to his house, he did not take me as his partner (the interviewee cries), he took me as an employee.</p> <p>Interviewer: Who did he live with?</p> <p>M: With the mom and his children.</p> <p>Interviewer: Did you have to do things in the house?</p> <p>M: Yes. I felt that I had no other way out, because to my grandmother, I did not want to return there, because of my uncles. My dad did not want to take care of me because he had nowhere to live. And to 'Sauce' I did not want to go either because I knew that it would be worse for me there. And I was afraid that something would happen to the girl. I did not know anyone, I had never gone. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Te enamoraste o fue un momento de pasión?</p> <p>Y: No, prácticamente considero que fue un momento de debilidad en la economía, él me ofreció un dinero y entonces digo yo: "bueno, ni modo, no lo voy a desperdiciar", y caí con él... (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Did you fall in love or was it a moment of passion?</p> <p>Y: No, I practically consider this a moment of weakness in the economy, he offered me some money and then I said: "well, anyways, I will not waste it", and I fell for him ... (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>V: (...) O sea, como mi mama vivía con ese señor, fui violada a los 5 años y después, para él protegerlo, me mandaba a dormir donde mi tía, pero mi tía me acostaba en el suelo como perro, me tiraban los huesos, es una vida... Me fui a los 13 años, con mi esposo. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>V: (...) That is, as my mother lived with that man, I was raped at age 5 and then, to protect him, she sent me to sleep at my aunt's, but my aunt put me on the floor like a dog, they threw me the bones, it's a life ... I left when I was 13, with my husband. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>K: (...) El me dijo que él tenía lástima de lo que yo vivía y él me dijo que me iba a dar un espacio donde vivir y así pasaron como 2 semanas. Pero -nadie nos va a creer que no hemos tenido nada-, me dice él, -es mejor que te metas conmigo para que ya vivamos juntos y así nadie te diga nada en tu casa-</p>	<p>K: (...) He told me that he felt sorry for what I was living and he told me that he was going to give me a place to live and that's how two weeks went by. But -nobody will believe that we have not had anything-, he says to me, -it is better that you stay with me since we already live together and so nobody tells you</p>

<p>entonces –si no tu mamá te va a llegar a traer y va a ser peor- entonces yo me inyectaba. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>anything in your house- then -if not, your mom will come to get you and it will be worse- then I went to get the injection. (woman, P / P)</p>
<p>‘varones no hacen nada – solo trabajan y descansan’ (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>'Men do nothing - they just work and rest' (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: Y a su compañero: ¿qué es lo que más le gusta de usted y lo que menos le gusta de usted?</p> <p>D: El dice que soy buena mujer, porque cuido su ropa, todos los días tengo comida caliente a su tiempo, su ropa planchada. Ahí estoy atenta con él. La forma que el me dice, yo le paso. Una tiene que ser atenta con el marido, entonces eso es lo que le gusta de mi. Pero a veces no le gusta porque dice que a veces, tal vez, él dice -péinate ese pelo, los pies mira como los andas sucios-. -Anda ponete bonita-. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: And your partner: what does he like the most about you and what does he like the least?</p> <p>D: He says I'm a good woman, because I take care of his clothes, every day I have hot food at the right time, I have his clothes ironed. So, I am attentive with him. The way he tells me to do things, I'll do them. One has to be attentive to the husband, so that's what he likes about me. But sometimes he does not like it because he says that sometimes, maybe, he says - pick up that hair, the feet, look how dirty you are walking around -. -Go and make yourself look nice-. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer; ¿Qué es para vos ser mamá?</p> <p>A: Es darlo todo. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer; What is 'being a mom' for you?</p> <p>A: It is giving everything. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Y el ser papá? ¿La responsabilidad de ser papá cómo lo entiendes eso?</p> <p>A: Bueno, para el padre no creo que sean tan indispensables como nosotras porque el papá viene... casi no se relaciona con ellos. Porque él trabaja, viene.... (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: And being a dad? The responsibility of being a dad, how do you understand that?</p> <p>K: Well, for the father I do not think they are as indispensable as we are because the dad comes ... he almost does not relate to them. Because he works, he comes ... (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Y: ...entonces yo pienso que los padres sí tienen una mayor responsabilidad, no solo en lo económico, no solo en vestuario, sino también en dar amor y enseñar a sus hijos a ser unos buenos hijos, a ser buen ciudadano, con buenos principios morales, éticos, espirituales... A veces los hijos están perdiendo los buenos modales, el respeto, la</p>	<p>Y: ... then I think that fathers do have a greater responsibility, not only economically, not only in clothes, but also in giving love and teaching their children to be good children, to be good citizens, with good moral, ethical, spiritual principles... Sometimes children are losing good manners, respect, education towards the elderly, even with their parents,</p>



<p>educación a los mayores, incluso a sus padres, entonces pienso que sí es gran responsabilidad inculcar buenos valores a sus hijos, si quieren que sean buenos padres, mejores que ellos, y buenos ciudadanos, que contribuyan al desarrollo de Nicaragua. (woman, P/NP)</p>	<p>then I think it is a great responsibility to instill good values to their children, if they want to be good parents, if they want them to be better than them, and good citizens, who contribute to the development of Nicaragua. (woman, P/NP)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Y para vos qué es ser madre? A: Yo digo que la palabra significa mucho: madre, y se deriva por muchas cosas, porque madre no es lo mismo que padre, porque yo te voy a decir algo: nosotros el día de mañana damos la vuelta y punto, la madre no, la madre es la que se queda con los hijos en las buenas, en las malas, en el hambre, en la sequía y en todo, entonces... y es aquella persona que a la hora que tenés un problema ahí te está poniendo un cojincito para que te golpeés poco y no te golpeés ¡bangán!, ya, para que ese cojincito te sirva de amortiguador del golpe que te vas a dar. Entonces yo creo que... el padre no, el padre: ¡la cagaste! Ahora ya qué querés que..... La madre no, viene y te tira el cojincito y que caiga al suave mi hijo y que no se dé muy duro y no se me cholle, entonces es lo que digo: padre a madre tienen un significado bastante grande, que es bastante amplio ese significado de ser madre. (father)</p>	<p>Interviewer: And what is it for you to be a mother? A: I say that the word means a lot: mother, and it is derived from many things, because mother is not the same as father, because I am going to say something to you: tomorrow, we will take a turn, period. The mother does not, the mother is the one who stays with the children in the good, in the bad, in hunger, in the drought and in everything, then ... she is that person that at the time that you have a problem, there she is giving you a little cushion so that you hit yourself less and so that you don't hit yourself – bang! so that this little cushion will serve as a shock absorber that you will give to yourself. So, I think that ... the father not, the father will be: you fucked up! Now, what do you want ...? The mother not, she comes and throws you the little cushion so that my son falls softly and that it doesn't happen to hard and so that he doesn't get angry, so that's what I say: from father to mother there is a pretty big meaning, it is quite huge this meaning of being a mother. (father)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Qué responsabilidades tiene un padre? V: Creo que es igual la responsabilidad, porque es gente que dice que la madre debe ser la cariñosa y el papá dar el dinero, creo que los dos tenemos una responsabilidad y creo que el hombre debe ser sumamente</p>	<p>Interviewer: What responsibilities does a father have? V: I think that the responsibility is the same, because there are people who say that the mother should be the affectionate one and that the dad should give the money, I think we both have a responsibility and I think that</p>

<p>capaz de poderle cambiar el pañal al hijo y de vestirle la muñeca a la niña, no es que la niña tiene que jugar muñeca verdad, pero en los estereotipos, creo que le hombre juega el mismo rol que la mujer, y la mamá que el del padre. No ver al papá como es el que me va a llevar a la fiesta y mi mamá es la que me regaña, sino que los dos. (woman, MC/NP)</p>	<p>the man should be extremely capable of being able to change the son's diaper and to dress the daughter's doll, not that the girl has to play with a doll, sure, but according to the stereotypes. I think that the man plays the same role as the woman, and the mother has the same as the father. So, to not see the dad as the one who is going to take me to the party and the mom as the one who scolds me, but both. (woman, MC/NP)</p>
<p>Y: ...talvez yo no voy a tener la oportunidad de ser mamá tiempo completo y no sé si quiero ser mamá tiempo completo 24 horas, me gustaría también tener algo para mí, sobre todo en el aspecto económico que te brinden independencia porque lo que he visto a mi alrededor mi hermana, mi padre y mi madre, si la madre no tiene ingreso, si la madre se dedica tiempo completo, el papá es el que genera los ingresos, al hombre se le meta una "mierda" en la cabeza de que el se cree superior, se cree yo proveo, yo mando, no sé, se les cambia un switch en la cabeza como que yo soy aquí el que doy el dinero y vos no haces nada, vos pasas aquí en la casa, se desvaloriza el trabajo de la mujer, a mí me da terror eso. Me encantaría estimular a mi hijo, pero también sé que no es por mucho tiempo y que yo necesito un desarrollo como mujer, no quedarme estancando, si no después, lo que he visto en mis padres y mi hermana, luego si es una mujer plenamente en la casa, hay aspecto de ella que no crecen, entonces cuando el hombre está creciendo ella no, entonces ahí hay un disparate que no van de la mano, hay una baja autoestima, hay manipulaciones, por ahí yo no quisiera ir por ese lado. Es buscar un poco el equilibrio, es complicado (risas) (woman, MC/NP)</p>	<p>Y: ... maybe I will not have the opportunity to be a full time mom and I do not know if I want to be a full time mom 24 hours a day, I would also like to have something for me, especially in the economic aspect that gives you independence because what I have seen around me, my sister, my father and my mother: if the mother has no income, if the mother is full time, the father is the one who generates the income, the man gets some "shit" in the head that he thinks he's superior, he thinks of himself as 'I provide', I decide, I do not know, this changes a switch in their heads like I'm the one who gives the money and you do not do anything, you spend the time here in the house. The work of the woman gets devalued, I'm terrified of that. I would love to stimulate my son, but I also know that it is not for a long time and that I need a development as a woman, not to be stuck, if not, then later, that is what I have seen in my parents and my sister, then later if a woman is fully in the house, there is an aspect of her that does not grow, so when the man is growing she does not, then there is an unevenness that does not go hand in hand, there is low self-esteem, there are manipulations, I would not like to take that route. Looking a bit for the balance, it's complicated (laughs) (woman, MC / NP).</p>

<p>G: (...) La sociedad de ahorita todavía es muy machista y entonces la mujer tiene que cumplir con un rol de súper héroe, porque ahorita... Antes en la época de mi abuela, era solamente ser ama de casa, ser esposa y mamá, antes no trabajaban. Ahora tenemos que ser esposas, ser madres, tener una carrera y trabajar, entonces la sociedad es... Si uno deja de hacer de todos esos roles, osea, uno tiene que cumplir con todo eso para ser excelente, porque si se dedica uno a ser ama de casa, entonces te dicen es una mantenida. Si solo uno trabaja en su profesión, entonces es egoísta y desatendida de su casa, te van a poner los cuernos, porque no atiende al marido y los hijos van a ser un desastre. Yo creo que eso, es lo que más critican, que la mujer tiene que cumplir con todo y tiene que ser súper héroe. (woman, MC/NP)</p>	<p>G: (...) 'The society of today is still very machista and so the woman has to fulfill a role of super hero, because right now ... Before, at the time of my grandmother, one was only a housewife, a wife and a mother, before they did not work. Now we have to be wives, be mothers, have a career and work, so society is ... If you stop doing all those roles, I mean, you have to comply with all of that to be excellent, because if you dedicate yourself to be a housewife, then they will say you are a kept woman. If a woman only works in her profession, then she is selfish and neglects the home, they will cheat on you, because she does not take care of the husband and the children are going to be a disaster. I think that's what they criticize the most, that the woman has to comply with everything and has to be a super hero. (woman, MC/NP)</p>
<p>G: Ella es responsabilidad tuya, pero eso sí le dice, cuando vos te me la llevas, si algún día vos me la venís a dejar, me la traes de vuelta como yo te la estoy dando. (Risas) Así se lo dijo mi tía, mi tía a él. (woman, P/P).</p>	<p>G: She is your responsibility, but that she did tell him, 'if you take her from me, if someday you will leave her, you will bring her back to me as I am giving her to you'. (Laughter) That is how my aunt told him, how she told him. (woman, P/P).</p>
<p>K: ...hay una concepción muy impregnada que dice -el que te mantiene, es el que te manda- o -el que te mantiene el pico es el que te manda al mico - el mico es la vulva. (...) (woman, P/P).</p>	<p>K: ... there is a deeply held conception that says -the one that sustains you, is the one that decides over you- or -the one that sustains your beak is the one that gets to decide over your monkey- the monkey is the vulva. (...) (woman, P/P).</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Había afección?</p> <p>D: Sí. Pero ya los últimos años, yo no, no, los últimos años, más que todo.... Más que todo era que, como una compañía. Ya no sentía que era por tener relaciones. Ah, mi amor esto. No. Ya no sentía aquella cosa de</p>	<p>Interviewer: Was there affection?</p> <p>D: Yes. But in the last years, I haven't, not, the last years, more than anything ... More than anything, it was like a company. I no longer felt it was because of having sex. 'Ah, my love, this and that'. Not like that. I no</p>

<p>que a la hora de tener, si a veces tenía relaciones era para ver que él no dijera: ve, tiene otro hombre. Pero...</p> <p>Interviewer: Mas para, para....</p> <p>D: Para callarle la boca. Pero no era porque yo quería. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>longer felt that thing so at the time of having, sometimes when we had sex it just was to make sure he would not say: 'see, you have another man'. But ...</p> <p>Interviewer: But for, for ...</p> <p>D: To keep his mouth shut. But it was not because I wanted to. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>D: Siempre nos llevábamos bien y todo, pero cuando habíamos problemas. Después cuando teníamos problemas ya la situación... cuando ya la niña, estaba un poquito más grande y todo, la situación se fue poniendo más fea y más fea y más fea. Llegó a golpearme, bastante. Una vez que me golpeó con una, este, una paja. Aquí tengo la seña. Me pegó con una paja. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>D: We always got along well and everything, but when we had problems. Afterwards, when we had problems, the situation ... when the girl was already a little bigger and everything, the situation became more ugly and uglier and uglier. He started hitting me, a lot. Once he hit me with a, this, a straw. Here I have the trace. He hit me with a straw. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Nunca lo denunciaste?</p> <p>D: No, al principio cuando estuve embarazada no, porque me quedaba sin... sin... él me daba la comida y todo eso. Entonces... (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: You never reported him?</p> <p>D: No, at first when I was pregnant, not because I was without ... without ... he gave me food and all that. So ... (woman, P / P)</p>
<p>K: No. Yo vivía mucha violencia y una pareja anterior que tuve me propuso irme a vivir con él, yo me fui con él a los 15 años y conviví 3 meses con él y bueno él me golpeó pero yo no lo detenía, porque era como una vergüenza pública, él era cristiano y no le gustaba que caminara con él. La gente con la que yo vivía no tenía confianza, yo sentía que si yo lo decía, la gente iba a pensar que era lo que yo me merecía por haber dejado a mi mamá. Entonces, pero mi mamá se dio cuenta porque los vecinos escucharon, unas vecinas le comentaron que él me golpeaba y entonces ella, quizó golpearlo a él pero afortunadamente....yo con él viví todos los niveles de violencia, inició con una faja,</p>	<p>K: No. I lived a lot of violence and a previous partner that I had proposed to me to live with him. I went with him at age 15 and I lived 3 months with him and he beat me but I did not stop him, because I was a public shame, he was a Christian and did not like me to walk with him. I did not have confidence in the people with whom I lived, I felt that if I said it, people would think that it was what I deserved for having left my mother. So, but my mom realized because the neighbors heard, some neighbors told her that he was hitting me and then she wanted to hit him but luckily ...with him I experienced all levels of violence, it started with a belt, then it was a</p>

después era a puño cerrado y las últimas veces era con patadas, palos, era mucho mucho (woman, P/P)	closed fist and the last times it was with kicks, sticks, it was a lot, a lot (woman, P/P)
<p>Interviewer: ¿Por qué no has tenido relaciones sexuales? (..)</p> <p>G: Principalmente donde voy a la iglesia me lo han enseñado y pues siempre ha sido un sueño para mí llegar virgen al matrimonio y honrar a mis padres. (woman, P/NP)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Why haven't you had sexual relations yet? (..)</p> <p>G: Mainly where I go to church they have taught me, and it has always been a dream for me, to arrive as a virgin to marriage and honor my parents. (woman, P/NP)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Y es importante para las decisiones que tomas en tu vida? ¿Crees que tiene influencia?</p> <p>T: Es que yo...No. El problema es que a veces dudo de alguna decisión o lo considero, porque hay muchas cosas que nos dicen en la iglesia de lo que debo de hacer, pero me pongo a pensar que Dios no pues, yo siento que las cosas que nos dicen no van en realidad con lo que Dios quiere, siento que Dios es tan misericordioso que no nos va a hacer cosas malas.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Tienes un ejemplo de eso?</p> <p>T: Aaaah...Yo soy heterosexual, pero pues tengo muchos amigos que van a la iglesia igual que yo y que son gay, entonces yo no creo que les va a caer un castigo o que no van a entrar al reino de los cielos por ser gay, entonces la iglesia lo pone como algo malo como una barrera, ahí siento que la iglesia en casos así es la primera portadora de discriminación, entonces no estoy de acuerdo. (woman, MC/NP)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Is he (God) important for the decisions you make in your life? Do you think he has influence?</p> <p>T: Is that I ... No. The problem is that sometimes I doubt some decision or I consider it, because there are many things that they tell us in church regarding what one should do, but I start to think that God does not, well, I feel that the things that they tell us don't really go with what God wants, I feel that God is so merciful that he will not do bad things to us.</p> <p>Interviewer: Do you have an example of that?</p> <p>T: Aaaah ... I am heterosexual, but I have many friends who go to church like me and who are gay, so I do not think they will be punished or that they will not enter the kingdom of heaven because they are gay, then the church puts it as a bad thing, as a barrier, I feel that the church in such cases is the first source of discrimination, so I do not agree. (woman, MC/NP)</p>
V: Nunca entendí los símbolos y la doble cara y hace poco entendí que la religión la inventó el ser humano y no Dios, entonces que no tenga religión no tiene que ser un	V: I never understood the symbols and the two-faced nature and recently I understood that religion was invented by the human being and not by God, so if one does not have religion that does not have to be an

impedimento para tener una relación con Dios. (woman, MC/NP)	impediment to have a relationship with God. (woman, MC/NP)
<b>Chapter 8</b>	
<p>Interviewer: Sí ¿Cómo decidiste salir de la escuela?</p> <p>N: Primero, porque talvez era bien caprichosa hacia lo contrario que mi mamá me decía, mi mamá me decía: ¡Hija estudia que es para tu bien y no sé qué!, ah yo decía, está loca si todo el mundo va a quedar a la zona, usted sabe pues lo contrario que ella me decía, era un poquito más malcriadita... (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Yes. How did you decide to leave school?</p> <p>N: First, maybe because I was very temperamental, I did the opposite of what my mom told me, my mom told me: Daughter, study because it's for your good and what do I know! Oh, I said, you are crazy if everyone is going to stay in the Zona anyways, you know, the opposite of what she told me, I was a bit, I was a little bit more spoiled ... (woman, P /P)</p>
C: se fueron con sus maridos y salieron panzonas. (woman, P/P).	C: They left with their husbands and ended up with big bellies. (woman, P/P).
<p>C: Pues ya no es como antes, de que yo decía: ala, qué van a decir mis amigas. Uy, mirá, porque anda con un hombre anda con una panza. También por el hecho, a bueno, como ya saliste embarazada, entonces, ya no te luce estudiar. Ahora lo que hay que hacer es trabajar. Hay que ver al niño. Hay que cuidar al niño. Entonces, yo pienso, en mi caso fue más por eso, por el, que pena mis amigas, después que yo era tan así, alegre. Vamos a tal lado. Sí, vamos. Después de salir y que me miren y uy, mirá, está embarazada. Entonces no. Decidí que ya no iba seguir estudiando. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>C: Well it is not like before, when I said: well, what are my friends going to say? Oh, look, because she's going out with a man, she is having a belly. Also, for the fact, well, if you already got pregnant, then, you are no longer interested in studying. Now what you have to do is work. You have to look after the child. You have to take care of the child. So, I think, in my case it was more for that, for him, what a pity my friends, and then I was also so, happy. Let's go to that place. Yeah come on. After getting pregnant they look at me and uy, look, she's pregnant. So, no. I decided that I was not going to continue studying. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>D: Es que en el colegio primario no es normal que una niña esté embarazada. Entonces, lo que hacen es, se van del colegio.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Sí? ¿Ellas mismas se van?</p>	<p>D: In primary school it is not normal for a girl to be pregnant. So, what they do is, they leave school.</p> <p>Interviewer: Yes? They themselves leave?</p>

<p>D: Sí. Se retiran porque salieron embarazadas porque según ellos la educación no es esa, salir embarazada. Entonces... (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>D: Yes. They leave because they got pregnant because according to them, education is not that, to get pregnant. So ... (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: Me contaste que cambiaste la escuela regular por los sábados ¿Por qué hiciste esto? ¿Cómo tomaste la decisión?</p> <p>L: Es que usted sabe que entra en un estado que la panza le crece, entonces estar yendo diario con el uniforme, usted sabe que el cuerpo le cambia.</p> <p>Interviewer: Sí</p> <p>L: Es más difícil, no se puede estudiar embarazada.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Por qué?</p> <p>L: Porque lo critican a uno, la gente de la casa y la gente de la comunidad, dice ve está embarazada y está estudiando. Eso no se ve bien.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Por qué será?</p> <p>L: Eso no lo sé bien, porque se supone que todos los que van a la escuela son niños y niñas, señoritas y uno llegar embarazada como que no es lo común o lo normal. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: You told me that you changed the regular school to go attend on Saturdays. Why did you do this? How did you make the decision?</p> <p>L: It is that you know that you enter a state in which your belly grows, then going daily with your uniform, you know that your body changes.</p> <p>Interviewer: Yes</p> <p>L: It's more difficult, you cannot study pregnant.</p> <p>Interviewer: Why?</p> <p>L: Because they criticize you, the people at home and the people of the community, they say, look she is pregnant and studies. That does not look good.</p> <p>Interviewer: Why do you think that is?</p> <p>L: That I do not know well, because it is assumed that all those who go to school are boys and girls, young women, but one going there pregnant that is not common or normal. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Hasta qué grado llegaste en el colegio?</p> <p>U: Llegué a segundo año. Dejé de estudiar porque me fui de la casa, y ya cuando me fui dije “para qué voy a estudiar, si ya...” Yo fui la que dije “no, no voy a seguir estudiando, porque ya me casé, ya tengo quién me mantenga, entonces para qué.” (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: What grade did you reach in school?</p> <p>U: I reached the second year. I stopped studying because I left the house, and when I left, I said "why am I going to study, if ..." I was the one who said "no, I'm not going to continue studying, because I already got married, I already have someone who sustains me, then for what? " (woman, P/P)</p>

<p>Interviewer: ¿Tenes quién te ayude a cuidar el niño?</p> <p>B: Tengo, pero no lo dejo solo porque está chiquito. El es malcriado. Estoy esperando que crezca un poquito. Ya puedo sentir que se puede defender. Porque a los 3 años ya avisan, ya dicen –mamá mire me pegaron-, -mamá esto-. Mientras que así chiquito no sabe. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Do you have someone to help you take care of the child?</p> <p>B: I do, but I do not leave him alone because he is small. He is spoiled. I'm waiting for him to grow a little bit. So that I can already feel that he can defend himself. Because at the age of three they already let you know, they already say -mommy, look, they hit me-, -mommy this. While when they are that little they can't do that. (woman, NP/P)</p>
<p>S: Yo desde pequeña anduve vendiendo, vendí cajeta, vendí buñuelo, todo lo que hacía mi mamá para vender, ella se iba por un lado y yo por el otro lado, todo este barrio y el otro y el otro me lo conocía. Trabajaba desde que tenía 9 años hasta los 13, en el sol o en la lluvia... (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>S: Since I was small I walked around selling things, I sold caramels, I sold donuts, everything my mom made to sell, she went on one side and I went on the other side, all this neighborhood and the other and the other, I knew them. I worked from the age of 9 until 13, in the sun or in the rain ... (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: Cuéntame un poco sobre tu trabajo ¿Qué haces?</p> <p>L: Estoy ahorita de asistente en la zona franca. A como le digo mi horario de trabajo es muy difícil, es complicado, porque usted sabe que uno tiene que regirse a las normas de la empresa, no es un buen trato, es muy duro. (..)</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Pero qué te pone triste? ¿El hecho que el trabajo sea bien duro?</p> <p>L: Sí, usted sabe que hay cosas que son duras, pero uno tiene que aguantarse ahí. Es muy duro, muy pesado, uno tiene que hacer lo que le diga si no te gritan. (Llanto). Ni beber agua muchas veces te dejan, porque tenés que sacar trabajo y 5 minutos de retraso para ellos es mucho. Mucha pérdida. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about your work. What are you doing?</p> <p>L: I am now an assistant in the Zona Franca. As I tell you, my work schedule is very difficult, it is complicated, because you know that one has to abide by the rules of the company, it is not a good deal, it is very hard. (..)</p> <p>Interviewer: But what makes you sad? The fact that the work is very hard?</p> <p>L: Yes, you know there are things that are hard, but you have to put up with it there. It's very hard, very heavy, you have to do what they say, if not they'll scream at you. (Crying). They won't even let you drink water sometimes because you have to get work done and being five minutes late for them is a lot. A lot of loss (woman, P/ P)</p>
<p>J: Una zona franca. Ahí estuve trabajando por tres meses.</p>	<p>J: A Zona Franca. There I was working for three months.</p>



<p>Interviewer: ¿Y cómo fue esa experiencia?</p> <p>J: La experiencia fue fatal porque nosotros, los mismos nicaragüenses, nos optamos a hacernos más grandes, entonces, porque ellos estaban optando porque los gobiernos son los koreanos pero te acceden a que estés con los mismos nicaragüenses. Osea, que ellos son tus jefes y todo y es mal porque los mismos, parece que nosotros los mismos nicaragüenses nos elevamos tanto la cabeza, que queremos mandar peor a las personas. Es como una esclavitud la que tienen en ese trabajo. Porque entramos a las seis y cuarenta de la mañana, se sale a las seis de la tarde. Es muy estresante. Te dan media hora de almuerzo, no más. No podés ir muchas veces al baño. Si estás enferma perdés tu viático, te quitan quinientos córdobas por el día. Osea, es una explotación masiva la que hay en esos tipos de empresa. Entonces, como yo ya no aguanté el trato de las personas, que siendo los mismos compañeros de Nicaragua, como le digo, entonces, yo ya no accedí seguir trabajando ahí. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: And how was that experience?</p> <p>J: The experience was terrible because we, the Nicaraguans ourselves, opt to make ourselves bigger, then, because the governments are the Koreans but they agree to you being with the same Nicaraguans. That is, they are your bosses and everything and it is bad because they, it seems that we Nicaraguans raise our heads so much that we want to order people even worse. What they have in that job is like slavery. Because we entered at six forty in the morning, and one leaves at six in the afternoon. It's very stressful. They give you half an hour of lunch, no more. You cannot go to the bathroom many times. If you are sick you lose your travel voucher, you lose five hundred cordobas for the day. In other words, it is a massive exploitation that exists in those types of companies. So, since I could not stand the treatment of the people anymore, the Nicaraguan comrades, then how do I say, I no longer agreed to continue working there. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>N: ...y ya me gustó y me quedé trabajando, de ahí me salí, dos años tenía de trabajar desde que me metí, dos años trabajé y me salí, descansé 4 meses y me acabo de volver a meter, porque digo yo muy poquito y ahora todo está caro, ahora no sale.... Por lo menos a mí no me gusta comer frijoles.</p> <p>Interviewer: Si</p> <p>N: A mi me gusta comer que el arroz vaya con otra cosa no con frijoles, entonces este... dije no yo me voy a trabajar, porque a los niños no les gusta comer cualquier cosa, entonces digamos que talvez subamos la casa para arriba verdad y la hacemos de bloque</p>	<p>N: ... and I liked it and I stayed working, then I left, two years I had to work since I started, two years I worked and then I left, I rested 4 months and I just got back in, because I say (we have) very little and now everything is expensive, now it does not come out ... At least I do not like to eat beans.</p> <p>Interviewer: Yes</p> <p>N: I like to eat rice that goes with something else not with beans, so then ... I said, no I'm going to work, because kids do not like to eat just anything, so let's say maybe we'll build up the house and we use cement blocks for the front of it, but we didn't have enough</p>

<p>adelante, pero no había mucho recurso, entonces y todo caro, no podía él solo. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>resources, so, and everything is expensive, he could not do it by himself. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: Sí ¿Cómo decidiste salir de la escuela?</p> <p>N: Primero, porque talvez era bien caprichosa hacia lo contrario que mi mamá me decía, mi mamá me decía: ¡Hija estudia que es para tu bien y no sé qué!, ah yo decía, está loca si todo el mundo va a quedar a la zona, usted sabe pues lo contrario que ella me decía, era un poquito más malcriadita...(woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Yes. How did you decide to leave school?</p> <p>N: First, maybe because I was very temperamental, I did the opposite of what my mom told me, my mom told me: Daughter, study because it's for your good and what do I know! Oh, I said, she is crazy, if everyone is going to stay in the Zona anyways, you know, the opposite of what she told me, I was rather spoiled ... (woman, P /P)</p>
<p>X: Eeeh...esto es un tipo de vida más que una carrera... eeeh desde los horarios... eeeh la presión, la temperatura...eeeh las relaciones, los clientes, pues para mi por ejemplo, los empleados. El hecho que soy líder tengo que liderar un barco de 14 personas, eeeh liderar sentimentalmente con ellos y profesionalmente, me he metido en la psicología, ahora me leo libros de psicología para poder liderar con ellos, porque es bastante...nadie te enseña cómo, nadie te enseña, entonces he optado por estar bien yo, curarme yo, sanarme yo y así poder enfrentar el barco. (...)</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Y ahora cómo te sentís en el trabajo no desde el punto de vista de que haces sino de lo que sentís? ¿Te gusta?</p> <p>X: Me siento como una guerrillera, me gusta encanta, me llena, me pesa, me pesa impresionantemente, pero me hace creer, entonces me encanta, me encanta el trabajo. (woman, NP/MC)</p>	<p>X: Eeeh ... this is a type of life rather than a career ... eeeh starting from the hours ... eeeh the pressure, the temperature ... eeeh the relations, the clients, for me for example, the employees. The fact that I am a leader, I have to lead a boat of 14 people, eeeh, deal sentimentally with them and professionally, I have gotten into psychology, now I read psychology books to be able to lead with them, because it is enough ... nobody teaches you how, nobody teaches you, so I have chosen to be well, to cure myself, to heal myself and thus be able to face the ship. (...)</p> <p>Interviewer: And now how do you feel at work - not from the point of view of what you do, but what you feel? Do you like it?</p> <p>X: I feel like a warrior, I love it, it fills me, it's tough, it's impressively tough, but it makes me believe, so I love it, I love work. (woman, NP / MC)</p>

<p>Interviewer: ¿Hay alguna persona particular de su familia de la que vos te sintas orgullosa?</p> <p>B: Sólo de mi mamá porque ella ha buscado como sacarnos adelante como sea. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Is there a particular person in your family that you are proud of?</p> <p>B: Only of my mom because she has tried to get us ahead by any means. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>S:... porque mi papá siempre fue desobligado, él todo lo que hacía era maltratarla a ella, la golpeaba y también a nosotros, entonces la que se encargaba de todo, de darnos estudio, comida y todo era mi mama. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>S: ... because my father was always uncommitted, everything he did was mistreat her, beat her and also us, then the one who took care of everything, giving us education, food and everything was my mom. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿A tu papá? ¿Por qué? Cuéntame por qué.</p> <p>J: Él, bueno, para mí es una persona que sabido conllevar su vida bastante bien porque, sin embargo, su papá él, cuando él tenía 12 años terminó su primaria, mi abuelo lo que hizo fue optar lo que trabajara distinto. Entonces, él se ha desempeñado toda su vida lo que es carpintería y ahora es trabajador de Gypsum. El cual trabaja en la, en la, en Vistas del Momotombo. Son unas empresas que están saliendo, constructoras de casas. Y a mí me parece una persona impresionante porque, cómo ha logrado sacarnos a nosotros adelante, sabiendo que es una persona que no tiene sus estudios realizados, pero siempre sigue adelante. Él es el que me apoya para mi universidad. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Your dad? Why? Tell me why.</p> <p>J: He, well, for me he is a person who knows how to lead his life quite well because, his father, when he was 12 years old he finished his primary, then what my grandfather did was he decided that he would work differently. So, he has worked all his life in carpentry and now he is a Gypsum worker. He works in the, in, in Vistas del Momotombo. They are companies that are coming out, house construction companies. And I think he is an impressive person because, how he has managed to get us ahead, knowing that he is a person who does not have his studies completed, but he always moves on. He is the one who supports me for my university. (woman, P / P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Hay alguna persona particular de su familia de la cual usted se sienta orgullosa?</p> <p>C: Mi hermana la que tiene 20 años.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Por qué te sentís orgullosa de ella?</p>	<p>Interviewer: Is there a particular person in your family that you feel proud of?</p> <p>C: My sister who is 20 years old.</p> <p>Interviewer: Why do you feel proud of her?</p>

<p>C: Porque ideay... cómo te dijera, ella por lo menos sacó su carrera, hizo algo....ya que yo no pude, ella lo logró.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Qué estudio ella?</p> <p>C: Sólo se bachillero, ya no pudo seguir estudiando en la universidad. Como no tiene posibilidades de pagar. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>C: Because, well,... how did I tell you, she at least got her career, she did something ... since I could not, she did it.</p> <p>Interviewer: What did she study?</p> <p>C: She only finished high school, she could not continue studying at the university. As she doesn't have the possibilities to pay for it. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>E: Porque ella (Note: her sister) ha salido adelante sola a la edad de 10 años. Ella se fue con un tío mío y ella ha salido sola desde ese entonces. Mi mamá antes se iba a fiestas. Ella era libertina, no se ocupó de sus hijos chiquitos. Entonces, ella de la edad de 10 años, ella sola ha luchado. Se casó. A los 13 se casó, a los 14 salió embarazada. Y pues ha sido mi hermana ejemplar, que ella sola ha salido adelante. Se volvió a casar, pero ella trabaja. Ella es una persona que se defiende sola. Lo que le da su marido es aparte, pero ella trabaja por lo de ella. Ella es una persona que se ha hecho una mujer fuerte, a punto de su misma experiencia...</p> <p>Interviewer: (Risas) Esfuerzo.</p> <p>E: Esfuerzo. Sola. Ha hecho sus cosas solas. Ese ranchito lo levantó sola, sin necesidad que nadie le ayudara, sin su marido ni nadie. Ella luchó. Hay cosas de ella que me hacen admirar. Mi hermana mayor se acaba dejar de su marido y ella no sé, es una persona de la que en verdad más admiro. Ella le pasa semanal su comida a mi hermana de los Cedros. 'Yo voy a dejársela'. Y ella ha luchado. Me ha vestido a mi hijo, porque ella en realidad me ha ayudado bastante. En los momentos que yo he estado más sola ella ha estado ahí. ¡Dale! Seguí adelante. Mírame a</p>	<p>E: Because she (Note: her sister) persisted on her own at the age of 10 years. She left with an uncle of mine and she has moved on alone since then. My mom used to go to parties. She was a libertine, she did not take care of her young children. Then, since the age of 10 years, she fought alone. She got married. At 13 she got married, at 14 she got pregnant. And she has been my exemplary sister, who has moved on alone by herself. She remarried, but she works. She is a person who defends herself on her own. What her husband gives her is separate, but she works for herself. She is a person who has become a strong woman, based on her own experience ...</p> <p>Interviewer: (Laughter) Effort.</p> <p>E: Effort. On her own. She has done her things on her own. That little ranch she brought that up on her own, with no need for anyone to help her, without her husband or anyone. She fought. There are things about her that make me admire her. My older sister just left her husband and she, I don't know, she is a person that I really admire the most. Each week she gives her food to my sister in los Cedros. 'I am going to leave it to her'. And she has fought. She has dressed my son, because she has really helped me a lot. In the moments that I have been lonely she has been there. Go ahead! Go forward. Look at</p>

<p>mí. Mirá mi espejo. Ella son 2 hijos los que tiene y ella sola.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Qué edad tiene tu hermana?</p> <p>E: Mi hermana tiene 22 años. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>me. Look at my mirror. She has two children and herself, on her own.</p> <p>Interviewer: How old is your sister?</p> <p>E: My sister is 22 years old. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>U: Por ejemplo mi mamá estudio medicina y sacó su especialidad en ginecología y después casi a los 50 años se metió a estudiar derecho, porque le gustaba entonces eso me gusta porque se atrevió a hacer algo para ella, ella estudió derecho porque siempre le ha gustado eso, son pocas las personas que se atreven a estudiar a los 50 años, eso me gustó bastante y ella siempre fue así, ella se metía a clases de cocina porque le gustaban, hacía su rol como madre y como ciudadano, pero también hacía el tiempo para hacer las cosas que ella le gustaban, entonces ese equilibrio si me gusta y a mi me gustaría tenerlo en mi vida. (woman, MC/NP)</p>	<p>U: For example, my mom studied medicine and got her specialization in gynecology and then when she was almost 50 years old she went to study law, because she liked that, so, that is what I like because she dared to do something for herself, she studied law because she always liked that. There are few people who dare to study at age 50, I liked that a lot and she was always like that, she went to cooking classes because she liked them, she played her role as a mother and as a citizen, but she also took the time to do the things that she liked, so it is that balance that I like and I would like to have it in my life. (woman, MC/NP)</p>
<p>Interviewer: Cristina una pregunta ¿Tenés una persona en particular en la vida a la cual vos admires mucho? ¿O te sintás orgullosa de esa persona? Si acaso fuera así ¿Quién sería? ¿Quién sería esa persona? ¿Por qué te sentirías orgullosa de esa persona?</p> <p>C: Eeeeh... Creo que podría ser una respuesta bastante extraña, pero creo que podría decir que mi misma, mi persona eeeeh, mis padres creo que vino de ahí eeeeh, me siento muy reflejada en ellos y creo que sería yo misma, por qué, porque no sé... admiro a las personas que siempre están en la lucha por ser mejores, superarse más que el día de ayer no en el aspecto económico sino personal y eso. (woman, MC/NP)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Cristina a question. Do you have a particular person in your life that you admire a lot? Or do you feel proud of that person? If so, who would it be? Who would that person be? Why would you feel proud of that person?</p> <p>C: Eeeeh ... I think it could be a pretty strange answer, but I think I could say myself, I think it came from my parents, I feel very reflected in them and I think it would be myself, why that, why I do not know ... I admire people who are always fighting to be better, better than yesterday, not in the economic aspect but in a personal sense and so on. (woman, MC / NP)</p>
<p>J: Bueno, diría por lo menos.... Ahorita, nuestra meta es querer comprar nuestra casa</p>	<p>J: Right now, our goal is to want to buy our house so we can have something of our own</p>

<p>para optar a tener algo propio y así irnos guiando y superando en nuestro hogar. Este, querer comprar nuestras cosas juntos. Yo por eso estoy accediendo a trabajar porque yo necesito mi ingreso como mujer. Necesito mi ingreso, necesito para pagar mi universidad o las cosas del bebé. Porque mi mamá lo que nos ha enseñado es no siempre procurar a lo que el varón te dé, sino que uno como mujer se tiene que superar sola. (...). (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>and in that way go on and move ahead in our home. So, we want to buy our things together. That's why I'm agreeing to work because I need my income as a woman. I need my income, I need to pay for my university or the things of the baby. Because my mother what she has taught us is not always to look for what a man gives you, but that a woman has to overcome herself. (...) (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>B: ¿Cambiar de mi vida? Mmm sería sacar a mi familia de aquí, sacar a mi mamá y a mi papá. Darles una buena vida a mi hija y a mis hermanas.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Qué necesitas para lograr eso?</p> <p>B: Superarme. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>B: ¿Change in my life? Mmm, it would be to get my family out of here, get my mom and my dad out. Give my daughter and my sisters a good life.</p> <p>Interviewer: What do you need to achieve that?</p> <p>B: I need to proof myself. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>B: Pero a veces no me arrepiento porque lo tuve ya madurita como dicen, no lo tuve a los 15, ni a los 13 que hay chavalas que les cuesta. Otra amiga, que ya no vive aquí, a los 12 años, tiene como 17 ahorita, el niño tiene como 4 años. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>B: But sometimes I do not regret it because I had him already as a mature woman as they say, I did not have him at 15, nor at 13 like some girls for whom it is hard. Another friend, who no longer lives here, had her baby at age 12, she is about 17 now, the child is about 4 years old. (woman, NP/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Más o menos a qué edad te ves para juntarte y tener hijos?</p> <p>D: Ya para juntarme podría decir talvez 24 o 25 años y ya para tener hijos 26 o 27 años, porque si ya me pongo a pensar bien a los 23 años no voy a tener un título de universidad, eso es mentira y lo primordial para mi es estudiar y sacar mi título de la universidad y eso es todo, ya después casarme, juntarme y tener mis hijos a los 26 o 27 años, que mi mamá me dice vas a parecer su abuela o mis</p>	<p>Interviewer: More or less at what age do you see yourself starting a relationship with someone and having children?</p> <p>D: For me to move in with someone I would say maybe 24 or 25 years and already to have a child 26 or 27 years, because if I start thinking well at age 23 I will not have a university degree, that is a lie and the paramount for me is to study and get my degree from the university and that's it, and after I get married have my children at the age of 26 or 27, so that my mom tells me you're going to look like the child's grandmother or</p>

<p>tías a veces me dicen eso, vas a parecer su abuela (risas) (woman, P/NP)</p>	<p>my aunts sometimes tell me that, You're going to look like your child's grandmother (laughs) (woman, P / NP)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿En qué te gustaría trabajar?</p> <p>B: La zona no me gusta. Después del bachillerato me consiguieron un trabajo en el mercado. Estaba trabajando de despachadora y ahí sabía bien matemática porque solo es matemática. Pero no me gustaría trabajar en la zona. Por eso es que yo quiero estudiar para trabajar lo que yo sé. Si voy al mercado, lo mismo voy a quedar y no voy a estudiar y siempre voy a estar en eso. Yo quiero estudiar. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: What would you like to do for work?</p> <p>B: I do not like the Zona. After high school they got me a job in the market. I was working as a dispatcher and I knew math well there because it's only mathematics. But I would not like to work in the Zona. That's why I want to study to work what I know. If I go to the market, I will stay the same and I will not study and I will always be there. I want to study. (woman, NP / P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Qué cosas desearías cambiar de su vida?</p> <p>C: Además de mi trabajo.... nada más. Sólo quiero tener una casa, que sea mía, vivir sola, estar bien, estable. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: What things would you like to change in your life?</p> <p>C: Besides my work ... nothing else. I just want to have a house, one that is mine, live by myself, be well, be stable. (woman, NP/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Por qué tanta ansiedad para la educación?</p> <p>D: Bueno, porque ideay en realidad yo soy joven, tengo 20 años y en realidad lo que te hace ahora es el estudio, ahora lo más importante es el estudio, prepararse para en un futuro no depender de ningún hombre, valerme por si misma yo que soy mujer. Estudia y ayudar a mis papás es lo que más me gustaría, porque mi mamá trabaja en el mercado y no me gusta porque a veces viene la pobre cansada y el trabajo de mi papá también es cansado y está trabajando desde 12 años, entonces me gustaría prepararme para ayudarles a ellos y para el día de mañana cuando yo tenga mis hijos darles una vida mejor, lo que no me pudieron dar a mis padres. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Why so much anxiety for education?</p> <p>D: Well, because well I am really young, I am 20 years old and in reality what one has to do at this age is to study, now the most important thing is study, prepare yourself so that in the future you do not depend on any man, to stand on my own, me, a woman. Study and help my parents is what I would like the most, because my mom works in the market and I do not like it because sometimes the poor woman comes tired and my dad's work is also tiring and he's been working since he was 12 years, so I would like to prepare myself to help them and tomorrow when I have my children give them a better life, which my parents could not give me. (woman, NP/P)</p>

Interviewer: ¿Cuáles son tus expectativas con relación al futuro de tu hijo? ¿Qué necesitas para lograr eso?

Y: Bueno, yo quiero que mi hijo sea una persona capaz de ver entre lo bueno y lo malo para él para su cuerpo su salud, mental, física, que sepa encontrar algo que le guste, si lo va a hacer que lo haga bien, obviamente por ejemplo, hay requerimientos sociales de colegios, universidad, si está bien, si quiere hacer un máster y quiere salir súper bien, me parece fantástico. No quisiera estar mal gastando mi dinero en un “maje” que vaya arrastrado, pero me gustaría criar a una persona que sea independiente, que sea capaz por el mismo, que siempre tenga presente que yo voy a estar ahí para él siempre, de cualquier manera y sobre todo que sea una buena persona, que encuentre su felicidad, allá él lo que quiera ser, como lo quiera hacer, porque no puedo imponerle nada, no puedo trasladar mis sueños a él, a lo que he visto con mi desarrollo, los hijos no vienen para cumplir las expectativas de los padres, los hijos son un ser completamente individual, un individuo aparte, que uno puede influir, porque por ejemplo me decían –va a ser un surfista- yo digo que él va a ser lo que quiera ser, si él surfea que alegre, al final que él encuentre lo que le apasione y lo haga con amor, al final es para mí lo que, a veces nos ponemos metas y caminos hacia lo que queremos llegar y hacer porque es algo que te pone el sistema, pero se nos olvida una parte que es hacer algo que nos apasione y hacerlo con amor, porque una vez que haces las cosas con amor, lo vas a hacer bien y todo este sistema del dinero, es una “mierda” porque te lleva a hacer las cosas por dinero y no por amor. Eso quisiera de

Interviewer: What are your expectations regarding the future of your child? What do you need to achieve that?

Y: Well, I want my son to be a person able to distinguish the good and the bad for him, for his body, his health, mentally, physically, so he will be able to find something that he likes, if he is going to do something – he should be doing it well. Obviously, for example, there are social requirements of schools, university, fine. But if he wants to do a master's degree and he wants to come out of that really well, I think it's fantastic. I do not want to feel bad spending my money on a "slacker" that I will have to keep dragging behind me, but I would like to raise a person that is independent, that is capable by himself, that always keeps in mind that I will be there for him always, in any way and above all that he shall be a good person, who finds his happiness, whatever he wants to be, how he wants to do it, because I cannot impose anything. I cannot transfer my dreams to him, I cannot translate this to what I have gone through myself, the children do not come to fulfill the expectations of the parents, the children are completely individual beings, a separate individual, that one can influence, because for example they said to me -he will be a surfer- I say that he will be what he wants to be. If he surfs then great, in the end he should find what he loves and do it with love, in the end it is for me what, sometimes we set goals and paths towards what we want to achieve and we do it because it is something that the system puts on you. But we forget a part which is to do something that we are passionate about and to do something with love, because once you do things with love, you will do them well. And



<p>mi hijo, que sea un buen hombre, que no sea machista. Que tenga un hombre que tenga bien activa toda su parte femenina y creo que tiene todo su potencial porque está rodeado de una familia con una visión diferente, tiene tías, abuelas, mamá, tiene todo que tenemos una visión diferente y tengo a todas mis amigas que son las tías no creo que lo vayan a hacer un machista, eso es lo que yo quiero, quiero traer una persona a este mundo que... cuando yo entré a la carrea uno entra con la idea de que quiere mejorar el sistema y te das cuenta que no puedes. Hay gente que se queda peleando –hagamos una campaña- yo lo veo que la campaña es a nivel local –mejorate vos- y los que están a tu alrededor tratar de hacerles cambiar lo que era antes. (woman, MC/NP)</p>	<p>this whole money system is a crap thing because it leads you to do things for money and not for love. That is what I like for my son, that he shall be a good man, not a macho. That he shall have a very active female side and I think he has all the potential for this because he is surrounded by a family with a different vision, he has aunts, grandmothers, a mom, we all have a different vision and I have all my friends that are his aunts. I do not think that they will make him a macho, that's what I want, I want to bring up a person to this world that ... when I entered my career I entered with the idea that you want to improve the system and then you realize that you can't. There are people who are fighting - let's do a campaign - I see that the campaign should be at the local level - improve yourself and those around you, try to make them change from what they were before. (woman, MC/NP)</p>
<h2>Chapter 9</h2>	
<p>Interviewer: ¿Hay alguna persona en particular en tu familia de la que vos te sentís orgullosa?</p> <p>F: De mi mamá. Ella es una buena mamá, por eso.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Cómo es una buena mamá?</p> <p>F: Para mí, es de esas que siempre están pendientes, siempre te están preguntando, sobre todo porque ella tiene mucha comunicación con nosotros. Al inicio nos sacaba las palabras con cucharitas. Siempre ha estado pendiente de la escuela, de la casa. De con quién estábamos y esas cosas. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Is there a particular person in your family that you feel proud of?</p> <p>F: My mom. She is a good mom, that's why.</p> <p>Interviewer: What is a good mom like?</p> <p>F: For me, it is one of those that are always ready to step in, they are always asking you. Because she has a lot of communication with us. At the beginning she would take out the words with spoons from us. She would always, always be aware of the school, of the house. She would always be on top of who we were with and those things. (woman, NP/P)</p>
<p>K: ...físicamente no le podría dar un rostro y tenía pocos recuerdos y feos recuerdos de él.</p>	<p>K: ...physically I could not put a face to him and I had only few memories and ugly</p>

<p>Cuando hablábamos a lo interno de la familia era un motivo de discusión porque nos causaba mucha molestia el abandono de él, económico, sentimental, en todo, nunca fue aunque sea un papá que se fue a otro país y aportaba económicamente sino que, sobrevivimos con lo de mi mamá y acordarnos de él provocaba mucha molestia entre nosotras y dolor pues sobre todo porque no podíamos estar con él.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Y ahora no le hablas más?</p> <p>K: No, por decisión pues, porque yo trabajé un tiempo en Constelaciones, yo tenía mucho resentimiento contra él, muchas cosas, que yo deseaba poder decirle, reclamarle, insultarlo inclusive, pero después que ví que todo eso más bien me afectaba a mí, traté de digerirlo y ahora siento que me afecta menos, también porque ya no soy niña, si vivo violencia, porque desafortunadamente todas las mujeres corremos mucho más riesgo de violencia que otras personas, que los hombres por ejemplo, pero ahora siento que nunca lo he tenido y que por lo tanto no me afecta. De repente me da tristeza llegar a esta conclusión de.... Inclusive la semana pasada mi mamá me comentaba –fíjate que tu papá está enfermo- me dice ella, -lo deberías de llamar- pero yo siento que es como perder el tiempo, porque al final a él es incómodo decirle, -soy Jennifer, la de la Ofelia- tenes que hacerle una presentación para que sepa con quién está hablando. Eso es incómodo porque .... pues no tengo interés. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>memories of him. When we talked among the family, this was a reason for discussion because it had made us very upset his abandonment, in the economic, and the emotional sense, in everything. He was never even a father who would go to another country and at least contribute financially, but instead we survived with my mom's and remembering him caused a lot of trouble between us and pain because especially because we could not be with him.</p> <p>Interviewer: And now you do not talk to him anymore?</p> <p>K: No, by decision then, because I worked for a while in Constelaciones, I had a lot of resentment against him, many things, that I wanted to be able to tell him, complain to him, insult him even, but after I saw that all that affected me more, I tried to digest it and now I feel that it affects me less, also because I am no longer a girl, yes I do live violence, because unfortunately all of us women are much more at risk of violence than other people, than men for example, but now I feel that I never really had him and that therefore it does not affect me. Suddenly it saddens me to come to this conclusion of ... Even last week my mom told me -you know your dad is sick- she says, -you should call him- but I feel like it's like wasting time, because in the end it's uncomfortable to tell him, -I'm K., the one from Caterina- you have to give him a presentation so he knows who he is talking to. That is uncomfortable because ... because I have no interest. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Te afectó mucho la muerte de tu papá?</p>	<p>Interviewer: Did your dad's death really affect you?</p>

<p>J: En el momento sí, osea porque tal vez uno no tenía comunicación, como que nos da remordimiento de conciencia. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>J: At the moment, yes, I mean because maybe we did not have communication, as if it gives us remorse of conscience. (woman, NP/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Tienes papá y mamá?  E: Mamá sí, pero papá no.  Interviewer: ¿Nunca tuviste contacto con él?  E: No, nunca.  Interviewer: ¿Y con tu mamá?  E: Sí, pero poco contacto. No convivimos mucho.  Interviewer: ¿Y tienes hermanos?  E: Sí, pero tampoco tengo contacto.  Interviewer: ¿Tu familia no tiene relación?  E: No (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Do you have a dad and a mom?  E: Mom yes, but no dad.  Interviewer: You never had contact with him?  E: No, never.  Interviewer: And with your mom?  E: Yes, but little contact. We did not spend a lot of time together.  Interviewer: And do you have brothers?  E: Yes, but I do not have much contact either.  Interviewer: So, your family has no relationship?  E: No (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Cómo te llevás con tu familia, son relaciones buenas, tu papi...?  Z: Pues... comunicación no he tenido la oportunidad de comunicarme bien con ninguno, ni con mi abuela, ni con mi papa, mi abuela fue la que me crió, ni con mi abuela, ni con mi papa, ni con mi mami, porque ellos dos se separaron, me dejaron con mi abuela, entonces cada quien tomó su vida, mi papa tiene dos hijos, mi mama tres conmigo, son tres hijos los que tiene, y pues, ellos no se interesaron ni por mi hermana ni por mí, la única que estuvo allí pendiente fue mi abuela, pero mi aubela tiene pensamientos todavía como de machismo, antiguos, "la mujer tiene que estar en su casa." (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: How do you get along with your family, do you have good relations, with your dad ...?  Z: Well ... communication, I have not had the opportunity to communicate well with anybody, neither with my grandmother, nor with my dad, my grandmother was the one who raised me, neither with my grandmother, nor with my dad, nor with my mom, because they separated, they left me with my grandmother, then everyone took care of their life. My father has two children, my mother three with me, she has three children, and therefore, they were not interested either in my sister nor in me, the only one who was there aware was my grandmother, but my grandmother has still thoughts of machismo, old thoughts, "the woman has to be in her home." (woman, P/P)</p>

Interviewer: Ok. Háblame un poco de tu familia ¿Con quiénes vivís? ¿Quiénes son? ¿Cómo se relacionan entre sí? ¿Tenés hermanos mayores o menores? ¿Hermanas?

X: Ok. Vengo de una familia bastante grande eeeeh, bien particular, es una familia compuesta de los tuyos, los míos y los nuestros. Soy la menor de 7 hermanos eeeeeh, el último ingrediente pues que se unió al clan.

Siempre crecí y veía a mis hermanos que entre ellos eran hermanos convivíamos realmente no era...no era, osea, estaban ahí todo el tiempo, entonces ese crecimiento fue en conjunto con ellos eeeeh. Tuve una infancia bien madura, no me dejaron nunca crecer, siempre fue como todo era la información (Ruido)... estaba bastante contagiada por 6 que me venían adelante, entonces si creo que fue una situación bastante importante, porque realmente crecí con ellos, crecí en ese nicho de amor, de apoyo, de hermanos y hermandad.

Interviewer: ¿Era el segundo matrimonio de tu papá? ¿Era el segundo matrimonio de tu mamá?

X: Sí ()...

Interviewer: ¿Se pelean? ¿Cómo son?

X: Bueno, obviamente sí como toda pareja son normales. Ellos crecieron... osea, ellos son un matrimonio eeeeh, súper bueno, son amigos, son bastantes confidentes y han logrado inyectarle y unirnos a todos, unir a toda la familia eeeh, entre mis hermanos ellos no son hermanos osea de sangre, pero crecimos juntos, entonces para mí ver a mis dos hermanas que son hermanas abrazarse,

Interviewer: Ok. Tell me a bit about your family. Who do you live with? Who are they? How do they relate to each other? Do you have older or younger siblings? Sisters?

X: Ok. I come from a very big family, eeeeh, very particular, it is a family composed of yours, mine and ours. I am the youngest of 7 siblings eeeeeh, the last ingredient that joined the clan.

I always grew up and I saw my siblings that were siblings among them, it wasn't, it wasn't, I mean, we were together all the time... it was not, I mean, they were there all the time, so I grew up in conjunction with them. I had a very mature childhood, they never let me second guess, it was always like everything was information (Noise) ... I was quite infected by the six (siblings) that came before me, so yes, I think this was a very important situation, because I really grew up with them, I grew up in that niche of love, of support, of siblings and brotherhood.

Interviewer: Was it your dad's second marriage? Was it your mother's second marriage?

X: Yes (...)

Interviewer: Do you guys fight? How are you with each other?

X: Well, obviously yes, they are normal like all couples. They grew up ... I mean, they are a marriage, super good, they are friends, they are quite confident and they have managed to bring us together and unite us all, unite the whole family. Eeeh, among my brothers they are not blood brothers, but we grew up together, so for me to see my two sisters who are sisters hug each other, love each other, cry with each other and love each other is

<p>amarse, llorarse y quererse es hermoso pues, es algo bien significativo.</p> <p>Eeeeh...Y ahora la relación con la ex esposa de mi papá y de mi mamá también es maravillosa, eeeeh hay bastante, bastante armonía. (woman, NP/MC)</p>	<p>beautiful, it is something very meaningful. ... And now the relationship with the ex-wife of my dad and my mom is also wonderful, there is quite a bit, quite a bit of harmony. (woman, NP/MC)</p>
<p>L: Nos llevábamos bien, pero ahora como mi mamá no se lleva con mi papá, entonces mi papá ... a mi mamá, se tuvieron que .... y un día que casi la mata. Siempre lo hacía, mi mamá le aguantó bastante porque tenía a mi hermano, pero ya después llegó un tiempo que ella se aburrió, encontró una pareja que sí la trataba bien, no la maltrataba, le ayudaba a hacer las cosas, no la obligaba a nada, entre los dos se llevaban, como debe ser una pareja; mientras que con mi papá la mandaba y la usaba como su empleada. A nosotros también nos maltrataba, nos pegaba, con la mano nos pegaba, no nos pegaba con faja. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>L: We got along well, but now, as my mom does not get along with my dad, then my dad ... my mom, they had to.... and one day he almost killed her. He always did that, my mom endured it a lot because she had my brother, but after a while she had enough of it, then she found a partner who treated her well, who did not mistreat her, he helped her to do things, he did not force her to anything, the two of them get along well, as it should be in a couple. While with my dad used to order her around and he used her as his employee. He also mistreated us, he beat us, he beat us with his hand, he did not beat us with a knife. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>A: Digo yo pues, que mi vida de ahora es mejor que la de antes.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Sí?</p> <p>A: Es mejor que la de antes, porque mi vida antes, para mí, digo yo, era un martirio, porque mi mama era una persona, como le digo, bien rígida. Ella criaba cerdos y si un cerdo se moría a mí me pegaba. A mí me pegaban por los animales, pues. Entonces, a mí se me metió una idea loca que yo dije: no, yo voy a salir de este martirio. Entonces mejor dicho desde esa edad, de los 14 años, de los 13 años yo me fui de mi casa.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿A los 13 años?</p> <p>A: A los 13 años yo me fui de mi casa. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>A: I say then, that my life now is better than before.</p> <p>Interviewer: Yes?</p> <p>A: It's better than before, because my life before, for me, I say, was a martyrdom, because my mother was a person, how should I say, she was very rigid. She raised pigs and if a pig died she would beat me. They beat me up for the animals, you see. Then, I got that crazy idea that I said: No, I'm going to get out of this martyrdom. So, rather, from that age onwards, from 14 years onwards, or at the age of 13, I left my house.</p> <p>Interviewer: At the age of 13?</p> <p>A: At the age of 13 I left my house. (woman, P / P)</p>

<p>Q: A mi padrastro sí, muchas veces lo vi, vivía allí en la casa y como él me apuntó él era mi papa, para todo era mi papa, cuando ya yo tenía como 7, 8 años empecé a agarrarle odio porque él en la noche se levantaba a tocarme, y yo le decía a mi mama y ella decía que era mentira, cuando tenía como 10 años mi hermanita, la más pequeña que había en ese entonces, ahorita tiene 13, ella me vio llorando y me preguntó que qué tenía, “nada” le digo yo, “tu papa que me toca en la noche”... vino la niña y le fue a decir a mi mama, entonces vino mi mama y lo que hizo fue pegarme. Cuando ella le preguntó a él, él le dijo que era mentira, entonces vino mi mama, agarró un cuchillo y se me tiró encima con el cuchillo. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Q: My stepfather yes, I saw him many times, he lived there in the house and as he pointed out, he was my dad, for everything he was my dad, when I was already 7, 8 years old I started to develop hate against him because in the night he got up to touch me, and I told my mom and she said it was a lie. When I was about 10 years old my little sister, the youngest one at the time, now she is 13, she saw me crying and asked me what was going on with me, "nothing" I say, "your dad touches me at night" ... the girl went and told my mom, then my mother came and what she did was hit me. When she asked him, he told her it was a lie, then my mother came, grabbed a knife and threw herself on me with the knife. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>U: O sea, como mi mama vivía con ese señor, fui violada a los 5 años y después, para él protegerlo, me mandaba a dormir donde mi tía, pero mi tía me acostaba en el suelo como perro, me tiraban los huesos, es una vida... Me fui a los 13 años, con mi esposo. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>U: (...) That is, as my mother lived with that man, I was raped at age 5 and then, to protect him, she sent me to sleep at my aunt's, but my aunt put me on the floor like a dog, they threw me the bones, it's a life ... I left when I was 13, with my husband. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Tienes amigas?</p> <p>E: Prácticamente solo en el trabajo, pero en el barrio no tengo mucha relación con los vecinos.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Por qué?</p> <p>E: Son muy problemáticos, y sacan información para andarla divulgando. Prefiero alejarme. (woman P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Do you have friends?</p> <p>E: Practically only at work, but in the neighborhood, I don't have much relation with the neighbors.</p> <p>Interviewer: Why?</p> <p>E: They are very problematic, and they take out information to spread it around. I prefer to stay away. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: Para a hablar un poco de sus amigas ¿Tienes muchas amigas acá en el barrio?</p>	<p>Interviewer: To talk a little bit about your friends. Do you have many friends here in the neighborhood?</p>

<p>D: No, (risas) de hecho yo acá en la cuadra no le hablo a nadie, no me relaciono con la gente de acá, no porque no sea sociable, sino porque aquí en esta cuadra casi no hay muchachas casi no hay jóvenes de mi edad y verdad que esta gente de aquí es muy chismosa y eso no me gusta, no me gusta relacionarme con ellas y no tengo amigas. Ni en el colegio porque yo ya me bachillere y en clases si tenía compañeras pero amigas no, osea, alguien a quien contarle mis cosas o así no, no creo en la amigas.(...)</p> <p>Interviewer: Y hablando un poco de la comunidad o siguiendo el tópico de la comunidad ¿Hay algunas cosas acá en la comunidad en que vives que si las mujeres la hacen a la gente no le gusta y van a empezar a comentar mal? ¿Hay cosas así?</p> <p>D: Si, aquí así es, creo que en realidad creo que en cualquier lugar si haces algo malo y lo estás haciendo la gente está encima de uno y si aquí se mira bastante, porque aquí se han dado varios escándalos de que talvez el vecino con la vecina, entonces los otros ya andan hablando y comentando y así, si da bastante aquí eso, por eso más que todo yo no me relaciono con la gente de aquí. (woman, NP/P)</p>	<p>D: No, (laughs) In fact, here in the block I do not talk to anyone, I do not relate to the people here, not because I am not social, but because here in this block there are almost no girls my age and it is true that these people here like to gossip and I do not like that. I do not like to interact with them and I do not have friends. Neither at school because I already graduated and in school I had acquaintances but not friends, I mean, someone to share my stuff or so, no, I do not believe in friends (...)</p> <p>Interviewer: And speaking a bit about the community or following up on this topic of the community. Are there some things in the community where you live that if women do them, people won't like it and they will start to comment badly? Are there things like that?</p> <p>D: Yes, here it is like that, I think that in reality I think that anywhere you do something bad, people are on top of each other and people here watch each other a lot, because here there have been several scandals that maybe the neighbor with the neighbor, then the others are already talking and commenting and so, yes, it happens a lot here, that's why more than anything I do not relate to the people here. (woman, NP/P)</p>
<p>M: Bueno, el va a trabajar, de lunes a jueves. El trabajo cuatro días a la semana pero hace turnos. Así pasa de la casa al trabajo. Pero hay domingos que se va a beber con sus amigos, bebe, y así.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Y vos cómo te sentís?</p> <p>M: Yo me siento mal, poruqe yo pienso que, osea y no salgo, no me divierto, el no me saca. Y el si tiene derecho a ir y yo no. Y si yo quiero irme el no me deja. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>M: Well, he's going to work, from Monday to Thursday. He works four days a week but he takes shifts. So, he goes from home to work. But there are Sundays on which he goes to drink with his friends, he drinks, and so on.</p> <p>Interviewer: And how do you feel?</p> <p>M: I feel bad, because I think that, I mean and I do not go out, I am not having a good time, he does not take me out. And he has the</p>

	right to go and I don't. And if I want to leave he does not let me. (woman, P/P)
G: Los hombres, casi, pues, no, no platico yo con, con hombres sólo con mi marido que, porque usted sabe mejor así, porque si un marido es celoso mejor no. (woman, P/P)	G: With men, almost, well, no, I do not talk with, with men only with my husband, because you know it is better that way, because if a husband is jealous, better not. (woman, P/P)
<b>Chapter 10</b>	
I: Y delante de los ojos de la otra muchacha él solo tiene un hijo. No dice pues, que tiene otra niña aparte. Sí. Eso pasa con él.. Y yo pues, discuto con la señora (note: the paternal grandmother) a veces porque ella le dice, mirá, tu papá te quiere. Mirá, tu papá aquí, tu papá allá. Yo le digo, le voy a decir algo, no le meta cosas a la niña que no sean verdades, porque él no la visita en ningún momento, le digo. Y no le diga pues, que su papa la quiere porque ni tan siquiera creo que ni se acuerda de su cara, le digo. No llega, le digo yo. (woman, P/P)	I: And in the eyes of the other girl he only has one child. She does not say that he has another child aside. Yes. That happens with him .. And so, I argue with the lady (note: the fatherly grandmother) sometimes because she tells her (the baby), look, your dad loves you. Look, your dad here, your dad there. I say, I'm going to say something, don't throw things on the girl that are not true, because he does not visit her at any time, I say. And do not tell her then, that her dad loves her because I do not even think he remembers her face, I tell her. He does not come, I tell her. (woman, P/P)
O: Es el papá de mi hija, es decir, me casé con él, pero como la fidelidad no es 100% segura, osea, antes que la niña cumpliera el año pues él me fue infiel, entonces fue como que no. Interviewer: ¿Vos tomaste la decisión de terminar con él? ¿O te abandono? O: Pues, él se fue de la casa, se fue casa con su novia digo yo, de ahí fue como un lapso, por así decirlo, de tiempo en el que uno se aferra hasta que llega un momento y decís que no. (woman, P/P)	O: It's my daughter's father, that means, I married him, but since fidelity is not 100% certain, I mean, before the girl turned one year he cheated on me, so then it was like, no. Interviewer: You made the decision to split up with him? Or did he abandon you? O: Well, he left the house, he went to live with his girlfriend, I mean, that's how it was like a lapse of time, so to speak, when you hold on until there comes a time and you say 'no'. (woman, P / P)



E: Se siente feo porque mi hija no conoce a su padre. Ahorita está chiquita, pero ¿cuando crezca? (woman, P/NP)	E: It feels ugly because my daughter does not know her father. Right now, she is small, but when she grows up? (woman, P/NP)
A: Mi propósito de cambio de mí va a ser mi hijo, no tratarlo como me trataban, él vino a ser, mi hijo vino a ser una puerta bastante importante en mi vida. (father)	A: My purpose of changing myself will be for my son, to not treat him like they treated me, he became to be, my son became a pretty important door in my life (father)
Interviewer: ¿Qué es lo que más te ha gustado a vos, siendo padre?  B: Ahora la gente lo mira diferente a uno, ya lo miran como un señor, a pesar que tengo 24 años y me siento chavalo, ya lo miran como un adulto, ya lo respetan, ya no lo tratan como a aquel cipote jodido todo chorreado, ya lo ven distinto las personas, ya le tienen más respeto y ya lo ven con otros ojos, se siente bien uno, se siente complementado. (father)	Interviewer: What do you like most about being a father?  B: Now people look differently at you, they look at you like at a gentleman, even though I'm 24 years old and I feel like a kid, they look at me as an adult, they respect me, they do not treat me like that mean fucked up guy. People see one differently, they already have more respect and they already see one with different eyes, it feels good, one feels completed. (father)
Interviewer: ¿Lo que menos te ha gustado?  C: Que ya no soy libre, antes podía hacer lo que quería. Ahora tento que ser responsable. Antes trabajaba solo sábado y domingo. (father)	Interviewer: What did you like least?  C: That I am no longer free, before I could do what I wanted. Now I have to be responsible. I used to work only Saturday and Sunday. (father)
J: Sí, porque antes más que todo, como le digo, jugaba futbol, me mantenía en la casa de los vecinos, como no tenía responsabilidad de nada, pero ahora actualmente ha cambiado porque ahora el trabajo es un poquito más pesadito, porque ya son dos criaturas que hay que darles, hay que mantenerlas, hay que darles ejemplo...  Interviewer: ¿Hay que darles ejemplo, cómo es eso?  J: O sea, ejemplo en el aspecto que miren que su padre trabaja, que no las vas a dejar	J: Yes, because before, more than anything, how should I say, I played football, I would hang out at the neighbors' house, as I had no responsibility for anything, but now it has changed because now the work is a little bit heavier, because they are already two kids who I have to give to, you have to support them, you have to be an example for them ...  Interviewer: You have to be an example, what does that mean?  J: I mean, example in that sense that they see that their father works, that you will never let

morir nunca, que van a tener el apoyo de él. (father)	them die, that they will have the support of their father. (father)
J: Al nacimiento de mi hija, ya no quise estudiar, quise mejor trabajar, porque nadie le iba a dar nada a mi hija, nadie me iba a ayudar con mi hija, yo tenía que hacerme responsable de mis actos, de lo que hago. (father)	J: At the birth of my daughter, I did not want to study anymore, I wanted to rather work, because nobody was going to give my daughter anything, nobody was going to help me with my daughter, I had to take responsibility for my actions, for what I do. (father)
Interviewer: ¿Qué significa para vos ser mamá?  W: Sentirse alegre con su hijo.  Interviewer: ¿Qué es lo que más te ha gustado de ser mamá?  W: Alegre. Quererlo y abrazarlo (woman, P/P)	Interviewer: What does it mean for you to be a mom?  W: To feel happy with your child.  Interviewer: What did you like most about being a mom?  W: Happy. To love him and to hug him (woman, P / P)
B: Ahora hay muchas chavalas jóvenes que le dejan el hijo a su mamá, a su abuela, a su tía, lo dejan abandonado, no le dan amor al hijo, desde el momento que lo dejan por así decir botados... ahí verán que hacen con su vida... (woman, P/P)	B: Now there are many young girls who leave their child with their mothers, with their grandmother, their aunt, they leave him abandoned, they do not give love to the child, from the moment they leave him thrown there so to speak ... from there they will see what to do with his life ... (woman, P / P)
S: Esos que no tienen hijos no se preocupan, no les importa hasta las clases, no les importa hacerlas o no las tareas, caminan como que el colegio fuera un lugar de diversión, de estar escuchando música y no le ponen interés porque no tienen una visión de que tienen que estudiar para darles un mejor futuro a sus hijos. Como no han pasado por esa etapa, son inmaduros todavía, no saben. (woman, P/P)	S: Those who do not have children do not worry, they do not even care about school classes, they do not care to do them or they won't do the homework, they walk around as if school was a place for fun, of listening to music and they do not have any interest in school because they do not have a vision that they have to study to give a better future to their children. As they have not gone through that stage, they are still immature, they do not know. (woman, P/P)
U: Sí... fue deseado, porque era varón, pero como yo no sabía, para mí que tener marido	U: Yes ... he was 'wanted', because it was a boy, but as I did not know anything really, for

y un niño era como un jugar, como un juguete. (woman, P/P)	me that 'having a husband and a child' was like a game, like a toy. (woman, P/P)
<p>B: Me levanto, cocino, despacho al esposo. Después a lavar, arreglar el cuarto, sacudir todo normal. Bañar al niño, dormilo, buscar que cocinar. Después como a los 3 de la tarde a buscar como hacer la cena. Volver a bañar al niño porque se ensucia y después amanecer con lo mismo.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Esa rutina es similar o diferente de la rutina de tus conocidas?</p> <p>B: Algunas no porque los deja cuidando y se van a bacanalear porque hay quienes son de la vida alegre. Enfiestada, toman, llegan bien tomadas, no miran a su hijo. Ellas pagan para que les cuiden a su niño. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>B: I get up, cook, get my husband out of the house. After that I wash clothes, fix the room, move around, like normal. Bath the child, put him to sleep, find what to cook. After about 3 o'clock in the afternoon I look what to do for dinner. Back to bathing the child because he gets dirty and then I wake up with the same (routine).</p> <p>Interviewer: Is that routine similar or different from the routine of your acquaintances?</p> <p>B: Some are different because they let someone take care of the kids and they go to parties because there are those who have a happy life. They go to parties, they drink, they get home quite drunk, they don't look after their child. They pay someone to take care of their child. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>S: Bueno, me levantaba a la hora que yo quería, a veces nos levantaban, digamos el sábado y el domingo nos levantábamos tarde, (...) Después venía, mi mamá me tenía la comida lista, ah mi mamá me hacía la comida, yo no cocinaba, ella me hacía desayuno y el almuerzo ella tenía el almuerzo ya hecho, entonces yo solo venía a lavar mi uniforme y ya, a hacer las tareas, me venía aquí a hacer las tareas, entonces hacía las tareas y ya. Llegaba a la casa, a veces cocinaba cena, a veces mi mamá, entonces más que todo ella es la que se encargaba de eso. Tenía tiempo para jugar, a veces del colegio nos quedábamos en un parque allí jugando, en unos chinos, y entonces estábamos algo grandecitas, yo tenía como 13 años porque estaba algo pequeña, y entonces allí en los chinos, allí nos</p>	<p>S: Well, I would get up at the time I wanted, sometimes we would get up, say on Saturday and Sunday we would get up late, (...) Later, my mom would have my food ready, oh my mom would prepare food for me, I did not cook, she made me breakfast and lunch, she had lunch ready, then I just came to wash my uniform and, to do homework. I came here to do homework, then I did homework and that's it. I came to the house, sometimes I cooked dinner, sometimes my mom did it, then more than anything she was the one who took care of that. I had time to play, sometimes we stayed at a park playing after school, there where the Chinese (shops) are, and then we were a little bit bigger, I was about 13 years old because I was a little small, and then there by the Chinese shops, we were</p>

pasábamos jugando, jugábamo. (woman, P/P)	strolling around, playing, we played. (woman, P/P)
<p>Interviewer: ¿Tenes amigos en el barrio?</p> <p>B: Bueno, los del barrio son algunos y son raros. Ahora que salí embarazada cambió la situación y no es lo mismo, porque antes venían y conversaban pero ahora no, como que cambiaron al mirar que sali embarazada.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Cómo te sentís con eso?</p> <p>B: Si me costó porque uno hablando con los amigos uno se desahoga y mientras no mirarlos uno se uno se pone deprimido, no es lo mismo ir a un lugar y andar en la calle, ahora hablas pero ya no jugas como antes. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Do you have friends in the neighborhood?</p> <p>B: Well, those in the neighborhood are a few and they are a bit strange. Now that I got pregnant, the situation changed and it is not the same, because before they came and talked but now they do not, it is as if they changed when they realized that I was pregnant.</p> <p>Interviewer: How do you feel about that?</p> <p>B: Yes, it was hard on me because when one talks to friends one vents and if one doesn't see them, one gets depressed, it is not the same to go to a place and walk in the street, now you talk but you do not play like before. (woman, P/P)</p>
E: Ahí fue donde cometí la brutalidad de salir embarazada. Ahí fue. (woman, P/P)	E: That's where I committed the brutality of getting pregnant. That's when. (woman, P / P)
<p>Interviewer: ¿Cómo te sentiste?</p> <p>L: Al principio asustada, porque usted sabe era mi primera vez y no sabía después que le iba a decir a mi papá. Me sentía como que había traicionado la confianza de ellos.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿De tu papá?</p> <p>L: Sí, porque no era lo que él esperaba, después no haya como decirle que estaba embarazada, pero tenía que decirle. (...) No. A los 5 días que yo me entere que estaba embarazada me fui, le dijimos a mi papá que estaba embarazada.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Cómo reaccionaron ellos?</p> <p>L: Ese día mi papá me corrió de la casa.</p>	<p>Interviewer: How did you feel?</p> <p>L: At first scared, because you know it was my first time and I did not know afterwards what I was going to tell my dad. I felt like I had betrayed their trust.</p> <p>Interviewer: Your dad's?</p> <p>L: Yes, because it was not what he expected, then there was no way to tell him that I was pregnant, but I had to tell him. (...) No. Five days after I found out I was pregnant, I left, we told my father I was pregnant.</p> <p>Interviewer: How did they react?</p> <p>L: That day my dad kicked me out of the house.</p>

<p>Interviewer: ¿Tu papá?</p> <p>L: Sí</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Y tu mamá no hizo nada?</p> <p>L: No, usted sabe que lo normal es que los papás se enojan y se molestan, porque se sienten súper defraudados. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: Your dad?</p> <p>L: Yes</p> <p>Interviewer: And your mom did not do anything?</p> <p>L: No, you know that's the normal thing that the parents get angry and get upset, because they feel super disappointed. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>I: Y él estaba esperándome y yo me fui a hacer la prueba rápido. Ya se la enseñé. Salí del baño y se la enseñé. Estaba enojado y hasta quebró la cosita de la prueba y no se la enseñés a nadie me dice por favor. Y se fue. No me dijo... se molestó, no me dijo palabras y agarró la prueba, la fregó, la destrozó toda y se fue. Se fue enojadísimo. No me dijo nada, nada. Y ya no se apareció y yo con eso, yo, mi mente estaba, tantas cosas que se venían a mi mente, pensar, mi familia qué me va decir, mis estudios. Mis estudios, se fue todo abajo, decía yo. Qué voy hacer así. Y más él con la actitud que tomó. Me sentía sola en ese momento. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>I: And he was waiting for me and I went to do the test quickly. I already showed it to him. I left the bathroom and showed it to him. He was angry and even broke the little thing in the test and 'don't show it to anyone, please' he said. And he left. He did not tell me ... he got upset, he did not say words to me and he grabbed the test, he scrubbed it, he destroyed it all and he left. He was very angry. He did not say anything, nothing. And he did not appear and me with that, I, my mind was, so many things that came to my mind, thinking, my family what will I say, my studies. My studies, everything went down, I said. What am I going to do like this? And even more him with this attitude he took. I felt lonely at that moment. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Y: Entonces yo estaba cerrada, decía no, no. A. me decía yo me caso sin problema. Pero yo era la que estaba totalmente cerrada, porque miraba el matrimonio como un fracaso y estaba aterrada con esa idea y estaba cerradísima. Una tía mía vino y me dijo, mira me dice –velo de manera estratégica, ahorita necesitas la ayuda de tu papá y estas de bien “deaverga” quieres que te acepten al hombre, quieres que te acepten la panza, quieres que te acepten todos tus términos y vos no das nada- (risas) entonces, me dice –si lo único que te pide es que firmes el papel, si no funciona se deshace-</p>	<p>Y: Then I insisted, I said no, no. A. told me I get married without any problem. But I was the one that was totally closed, because I perceived marriage as a failure and I was terrified with that idea and so I insisted. An aunt of mine came and told me, look, she says to me – you got to see this strategically, right now you need your dad's help and you're quite trapped you want them to accept the guy, you want them to accept your belly, you want them to accept everything at your terms and you do not give them anything- (laughs) then, she says to me - if the only thing that he asks you is that you sign the paper, if it does</p>

<p>entonces yo dije, bueno, le dije a A. –mira la pensé, hagamoslo- y en 3 semanas montamos una boda y la hicimos una boda linda apoyada por todos los amigos, con súper poca plata pero salió bello, llenísimo de amor y lindísimo. Pero te puedo decir que fue una decisión tomada por mi papá. Fue entre los dos, pero más que nada porque era un requisito que mi papá quería. (woman, MC/NP)</p>	<p>not work it gets undone - then I said, well, I said to A. – look, I thought about it, let's do it - and in 3 weeks we set up a wedding and we had a beautiful wedding supported by all our friends, with super little money but it came out beautifully, full of love and beautiful. But I can tell you that it was a decision made by my dad. It was between the two of us, but more than anything because it was a requirement that my dad wanted. (woman, MC/NP)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Se hicieron novios?</p> <p>M: Sí, fuimos novios como dos meses. De ahí, cuando mi abuelita se dio cuenta me pegó, me pegó mi papá, me pegó ella. Ella vino... como la gente le decía cosas... como es de esas señoras que era bien estricta, ella me dijo – si vos ya vivís con él, vayase de la casa-. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: You were a couple?</p> <p>M: Yes, we were a couple for about two months. From there, when my grandmother realized she hit me, my dad hit me, she hit me. She came ...because people were saying things ... because she was one of those ladies who are very strict, she told me - if you already live with him, leave the house-. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>M: Estuvimos bien, pero después el cambió. El me pegaba, me salí de estudiar. Ahí fue cuando quedé en 6to grado. Me dejó encerrada. Yo intenté irme varias veces... pero la vez que yo logré escaparme me fui para mi casa, mi abuelita ya no me quiso, me dijo que ya no, porque ya andaba embarazada, ya andaba por tener a la niña. Y ella dijo que no, ni papá me dio la espalda y ella también. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>M: We were fine, but then he changed. He hit me, I left school. That's when I was in 6th grade. He left me locked up. I tried to leave several times ... but that time I managed to escape I went to my house, my grandmother did not want me anymore, she told me that no longer I could stay there, because I was already pregnant, I was already having the baby. And she said no, not even my dad, turned his back on me and so did she. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>J: Bueno, en la mañana mi hijo se levanta a las seis de la mañana todos los días. Lo primero que hace es pedir su pacha de leche. En la cual ya se le prepara y se le da ahí mismo, en la cama, porque es haragán. Después de eso, me levanto, le doy de comer. A él se le da en la mañana, por la</p>	<p>J: Well, in the morning my son gets up at six in the morning every day. The first thing he does is ask for his bottle of milk. Which I already prepare and give it to him right there, in bed, because he is lazy. After that, I get up, I feed him. In the morning, in the morning he gets banana, biscuits, yogurt and then he is</p>

<p>mañana se le da lo que es banano, galletas, yogurt y después se le suele bañar. Se duerme. Yo ya me quedo haciendo, lavando, limpiando. Este, después de que él se levanta se le da su almuerzo. Porque allá nos rotamos la cocina, donde mi mamá. Porque, como somos nosotros los dos aquí, entonces, a mí como que casi me gusta. Entonces, voy a cocinar allá y allá hago mi almuerzo, mi cena. Aquí ya vengo, otra vez ya limpio por la tarde. Al niño lo saco por la tarde un rato a andar en un carrito que le acaban de comprar. Entonces, lo paseo. Después lo llevo donde su abuela. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>usually having his bath. He falls asleep. I already stay up doing things, washing, cleaning. After he gets up, he gets his lunch. Because at my mom's we switch using the kitchen. Because, as we are both there, then, I like that, I almost like it. So, I'm cooking there and there I make my lunch, my dinner. I come back here again and clean in the afternoon. I take the kid out in the afternoon for a while to have him ride a cart that they just bought him. Then, I go for a walk with him. Then I take him to his grandmother. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>G: Este, cuando me levanto, hago el desayuno, visto a mis dos niñas que van para clases, las voy a dejar a las seis y cuarenta y cinco, las voy a dejar a clases, después que vengo de clases, de dejarlas a clases, barro el patio, limpio, es, lavo trastes, todo hago, lo de la casa. Después baño al niño. Y después que baño al niño, cocino. (...) Ustedes vieran como andaba ahorita que andaba barriendo el patio. (Risas) Sucio, sucio, sucio. Entonces, lo tuve que bañar otra vez y ya normal.</p> <p>Interviewer: Sí</p> <p>G: El de su parte se baña cinco veces. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>G: This, when I get up, I make breakfast, I get my two girls dressed so they can go to school, I'll drop them at six forty-five, I'll drop them in school, after I come back from school, from dropping them at school, I sweep the patio, I clean, I wash the dishes, I do everything, everything concerning the house. After that I bathe the child. And after I bathe the child, I cook. (...) You could see how I was doing right now when I was just sweeping the yard. (Laughter) Dirty, dirty, dirty. Then, I had to bathe again and then, normal.</p> <p>Interviewer: Yes.</p> <p>G: He has a bath five times a day. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Es similar esa rutina a la de tus amigos y amigas, o la tuya es diferente?</p> <p>R: Sí, la mía es muy diferente. Mis amigos me dicen "vamos", no puedo les digo, no puedo hacer lo que ustedes hacen. No es similar, bueno algunas veces salimos, pero no que yo salga con mis amigos, o yo salgo y</p>	<p>Interviewer: Is that routine similar to the one of your friends, or is yours different?</p> <p>R: Yes, mine is very different. My friends tell me "let's go", I can't, I tell them, I cannot do what you do. It's not similar, well sometimes we go out, but not that I really go out with my friends, or if I go out it does not take</p>

<p>no tardo mucho tiempo, como dos horas. (...) Es muy diferente a como pensaba antes, antes solo pensaba en salir con mis amigas, ahora no, cada ingreso que me cae ya no es para mí, sí una parte es para mí, pero tengo que pensar en lo que le falta, ropa, zapatos, no puedo ser egoísta, yo pienso en la salud de él, no solo en estudiar. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>long, like two hours. (...) It is very different now from what I was thinking before, before I only thought about going out with my friends, now no, every income that comes in is no longer for me, yes, a part is for me, but I have to think about what it lacking, clothes, shoes, I cannot be selfish, I think about his health, not just in studying. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>Interviewer: ¿Y cómo fue la experiencia de ser mamá?</p> <p>F: Para mí, al momento fue alegre. Igual, ha sido alegre; pero no terminé mi adolescencia. No la terminé.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿En qué sentido?</p> <p>F: Pues, para mí hubiera seguido preparándome. Cosas así.</p> <p>Interviewer: ¿Preparándote para qué?</p> <p>F: Para estudiar mi carrera. (woman, P/P)</p>	<p>Interviewer: And how was the experience of being a mom?</p> <p>F: For me, at the time it was happiness. Likewise, it has been a happy experience; but I did not finish my adolescence. I did not finish it.</p> <p>Interviewer: In what sense?</p> <p>F: Well, for me I would have continued preparing myself. Things like that.</p> <p>Interviewer: Preparing you for what?</p> <p>F: To study my career. (woman, P/P)</p>
<p>G: Ellos siempre se han llevado bien. Nunca han tenido ningún conflicto. Es un excelente ejemplo digamos para mí. Ha sido la mejor familia. En realidad son súper lindos, me han apoyado cuando quedé embarazada, obviamente fue un choque emocional para ellos, porque yo quedé embarazada muy joven, entonces creo que a ellos se les desboronó la vida, pero lo único que me pidieron era que yo siguiera estudiando, pues que mi vida no quedara ahí como mamá y ya, sino que ellos me querían ver bien, triunfar y seguir adelante y prácticamente me obligaron pues, osea, me dijeron bueno ahorita en esto nos traicionaste, nos decepcionaste, pero te vamos a apoyar y tenés que cumplirnos con los estudios. (woman, MC/P)</p>	<p>G: They have always gotten along well. They have never had any conflict. It is an excellent example, let's say for me. It has been the best family. Actually they are super cute, they have supported me when I got pregnant, obviously it was an emotional shock for them, because I got pregnant very young, so I think that they got overwhelmed, but all they asked me was that I continue studying, so that my life would not just remain there as a mother and that's it, but they wanted to see me well, succeed and keep going and practically forced me, well, they told me right now you betrayed us, disappointed us, but we will support you and you have to complete your studies. (woman, MC/P)</p>



## Annex 3: Research instruments

<b>Women with pregnancy experience</b>	
<p><b>¿Quisiéramos saber cómo se encuentra hoy?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Cuántos años tiene?</li> <li>- ¿Desde cuándo ha vivido en este barrio/comunidad?</li> </ul> <p><b>Cuénteme un poco acerca de su familia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Adónde vive su familia actualmente?</li> <li>- ¿Cuántos hermanos y hermanas tiene? ¿Son menores o mayores que usted?</li> <li>- ¿Qué edad tenía su mamá cuando tuvo a su primer hijo/a?</li> </ul> <p><b>Cuénteme sobre las relaciones al interior de su familia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Cómo se lleva usted con su familia?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo son las relaciones entre su papá y su mamá?</li> <li>- ¿Entre su papá y su mamá y sus hermanos/as?</li> </ul> <p><b>¿Hay alguna persona particular de su familia de la cual usted se sienta orgullosa?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Por qué se siente orgullosa de esa persona? Si la respuesta es negativa, ¿por qué no se siente orgullosa de ninguna persona de su familia?</li> <li>- ¿Quién considera usted manda en el hogar? (Explorar quién toma las decisiones en la familia).</li> </ul> <p><b>Cuénteme sobre sus amigos/as</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Quiénes son sus amigos/as y qué hacen?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo es la relación de usted con sus amigos/as?</li> <li>- ¿Hay diferencias entre sus amigos/as y cuáles son?</li> </ul>	<p><b>We would we like to know how you are doing today?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How old are you?</li> <li>- Since when have you lived in this neighborhood / community?</li> </ul> <p><b>Tell me a little about your family</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where does your family currently live?</li> <li>- How many brothers and sisters do you have? Are they younger or older than you?</li> <li>- How old was your mom when she had her first child?</li> <li>-</li> </ul> <p><b>Tell me about the relationships within your family</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you get along with your family?</li> <li>- How are the relations between your dad and your mom?</li> <li>- Between your dad, your mom and your siblings?</li> </ul> <p><b>Is there any particular person in your family that you feel proud of?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why do you feel proud of that person? If the answer is negative, why do you not feel proud of anyone in your family?</li> <li>- Who do you think gets to decide in the home? (Explore who makes decisions in the family).</li> </ul> <p><b>Tell me about your friends.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who are your friends and what do they do?</li> <li>- How is your relationship with your friends?</li> <li>- Are there differences between your friends and which are those?</li> <li>-</li> </ul> <p><b>Tell me about the women in your community?</b></p>

**¿Cuénteme sobre las mujeres de su comunidad?**

- ¿Qué cosas pueden hacer las mujeres que no sea del agrado de la comunidad y que por esta razón la critiquen negativamente? Y por qué?
- ¿Qué piensa usted de estas críticas?
- ¿En la comunidad las mujeres son solidarias con otras mujeres? Si se ayudan, ¿cómo es esa ayuda/apoyo? Si la respuesta es negativa, ¿cuáles son las razones de esa falta de solidaridad?

**Ahora, hablemos de los hombres de su comunidad**

- ¿Qué cosas pueden hacer los hombres que no sea del agrado de la comunidad y que por esta razón lo critiquen "negativamente"? ¿Y por qué?
- ¿Qué piensa usted de estas críticas?

**Hablaremos sobre usted y su rutina diaria**

- ¿Qué actividades realiza usted diariamente?
- ¿Esa rutina es similar o diferente de la rutina de sus amigas?
- ¿Es similar o diferente de la rutina de su pareja? si no tiene pareja: de sus hermanos/ amigos? Como y por qué?

**¿Cómo era su rutina diaria antes que naciera su primer hijo/a?**

- ¿Su rutina diaria era diferente? Si así era, ¿puede describirla? ¿En qué era diferente o qué hacía diferente?

**¿Si usted practica alguna religión, como influye está en sus decisiones? ¿Puede darnos un ejemplo?**

**Educación: ¿Qué educación tiene usted?**

*En caso que la entrevistada continúe estudiando.*

- What things can women do that the community does not like and for which reason women are being criticized negatively? And why is that so?
- What do you think of these criticisms?
- In the community, is there solidarity among women? If they help each other, how is that help / support? If the answer is negative, what are the reasons for this lack of solidarity?

**Now, let's talk about the men in your community**

- What things can men do that the community does not like and for which reason women are being criticized "negatively"? And why is that so? What do you think of these criticisms?

**Let's talk about you and your daily routine**

- What activities do you do daily?
- Is that routine similar or different from your friends' routine?
- Is it similar or different from your partner's routine? if she doesn't have a partner: similar or different from your brothers' / friends' routine? How and why?

**How was your daily routine before your first child was born?**

- Was your daily routine different? If so, can you describe it? What was different or what did you do differently?

**If you practice any religion, how does it influence your decisions. Can you give us an example?**

**Education: What level of education do you have?**

*In case the interviewee continues studying:*

- Which level of studies would you like to reach and why do you want to reach that

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Hasta qué nivel de estudios le gustaría llegar y por qué quiere llegar hasta ese nivel? (Bien sea de educación de adultos, carrera técnica, primaria, secundaria, universidad)</li> <li>- ¿Usted piensa que es posible lograrlo y por qué?</li> <li>- ¿De qué depende que lo logre?</li> <li>- ¿Hay alguien que esté apoyándola para que siga estudiando?</li> </ul> <p><i>En caso que la persona entrevistada haya interrumpido sus estudios,</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Por qué razones interrumpió sus estudios?</li> <li>- ¿Por qué tomó esa decisión? ¿Fue influenciada por otra persona o por otras circunstancias?</li> <li>- ¿Usted tiene planes para continuar estudiando?</li> </ul> <p><b>¿Cómo se mantiene usted?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Tiene alguna fuente de ingresos propios o un trabajo asalariado? (<i>indagar si está totalmente o parcialmente dependiente de otros/as</i>)</li> <li>- ¿Quién o quienes le ayudan para el mantenimiento del hogar? ¿Como? (ingresos de trabajo, remesas, apoyo momentáneo etc.)? ¿Cuántos ingresos – y proveniente de qué tipo de trabajo tiene su hogar más o menos?</li> </ul> <p><i>(Indagar si son ingresos provenientes de economía informal/ formal – estable etc.)</i></p> <p><i>Si ya respondió antes que ella trabaja:</i></p> <p><b>Cuéntame un poco sobre su trabajo – que hace?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Le gusta? ¿Quería hacer otra cosa en el futuro? Porque si? ¿Porque no?</li> <li>- ¿Usted tenía otro trabajo antes del que menciona? ¿Cuál era su trabajo? ¿Cuándo lo realizó y por qué no siguió?</li> </ul> <p><b>Si piensa en el futuro:</b></p> <p><b>Cuénteme sobre lo que es importante en su vida.</b></p>	<p>level? (Can be adult education, technical career, elementary school, high school, university)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you think it is possible to achieve it and why?</li> <li>- What does it depend on whether you will achieve it or not?</li> <li>- Is there someone who is supporting you to continue studying?</li> </ul> <p><i>In case the person interviewed has interrupted their studies,</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why did you interrupt your studies?</li> <li>- Why did you make that decision? Was it influenced by another person or by other circumstances?</li> <li>- Do you have plans to continue studying?</li> </ul> <p><b>How do you maintain yourself?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you have any source of your own income or a salaried job? (<i>inquire if she is totally or partially dependent on others</i>)</li> <li>- Who helps you maintain the home? How? (<i>income from work, remittances, momentary support, etc.</i>) How much income does your household have more or less - and from what kind of work?</li> </ul> <p><i>(Find out if are income is from informal / formal/ stable job.)</i></p> <p><i>If she has already answered before that she works:</i></p> <p><b>Tell me a little about your work - what do you do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you like it? Would you like to do something else in the future? Why so? Why not?</li> <li>- Did you have another job before the one you mentioned? What was your job? When did you do it and why did not you continue?</li> </ul> <p><b>If you think about the future:</b></p> <p><b>Tell me about what is important in your life.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Which things would you want to change in your life?</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Qué cosas desearía cambiar en su vida?</li> <li>- ¿Qué necesita usted para que esas cosas cambien en su vida realmente?</li> </ul> <p><b>¿Cuáles considera usted serán las principales dificultades que enfrentará?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Cómo piensa hacer para enfrentarlas?</li> <li>- ¿Necesita de apoyo o ayuda para enfrentarlas?</li> </ul> <p><b>Piense en los nuevos pasos a dar en su vida:</b> Por ejemplo, pensando en el matrimonio.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Cómo decidiría usted casarse o juntarse? ¿Con quién consultaría la decisión de casarse o juntarse? ¿De qué dependería esta decisión? (<i>Si está casada o juntada se preguntará en pasado y no en condicional</i>).</li> <li>- ¿Cuántos hijos/as piensa tener? ¿De qué aspectos depende este número de hijos/as que piensa tener en total? ¿Quién tomará la decisión /definitiva sobre el número de hijos/as que usted tendrá?</li> </ul> <p><b>¿Tiene una pareja en la actualidad?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Es el padre de su primer hijo/a?</li> <li>- ¿Qué edad tiene?</li> <li>- ¿A qué se dedica?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo lo conoció?</li> <li>- ¿Desde hace cuánto tiempo son pareja?</li> <li>- ¿Qué es lo que más le gusta de su compañero y lo que menos le gusta de él?</li> <li>- Y a su compañero: ¿qué es lo que más le gusta de usted y lo que menos le gusta de usted?</li> </ul> <p><i>En caso negativo:</i> ¿Tenía una pareja antes? Cuéntame sobre esta <b>última relación</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Qué edad tenía – o tiene ahora?</li> <li>- ¿A qué se dedica?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo lo conoció?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you need to change those things in your life?</li> </ul> <p><b>Which do you consider will be the main difficulties you will face?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you plan to face them?</li> <li>- Do you need support or help to face them?</li> </ul> <p><b>Think about the new steps to take in your life:</b> For example, thinking about marriage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How would you decide to marry or get together? With whom would you consult the decision to marry or get together? What would this decision depend on? (If married or living in a union, ask in the past and not in conditional).</li> <li>- How many children do you think you will have? What does this number of children depend on? Who will make the final decision about the number of children you will have?</li> </ul> <p><b>Do you currently have a partner?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is he the father of your first child?</li> <li>- How old is he?</li> <li>- What does he do for a living?</li> <li>- How did you meet him?</li> <li>- How long have you been a couple?</li> <li>- What do you like most about your partner and what do you like least about him?</li> <li>- And your partner: what does he like most about you and what does he like the least?</li> </ul> <p><i>If she doesn't have a partner:</i> Did you have a partner before? Tell me about this <b>last relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How old was he - or how old is he now?</li> <li>- What does he do for a living?</li> <li>- How did you meet him?</li> <li>- How long was he your partner?</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Cuánto tiempo fue su pareja?</li> <li>- ¿Qué es lo que más le gustaba en él y lo que menos le gusta de él?</li> <li>- Y a su compañero: ¿qué es lo que más le gustaba de usted y lo que menos le gustaba de usted?</li> <li>- ¿Y como o porque terminaron la relación?</li> </ul> <p><b>¿Está usted casada vive en unión de hecho con su compañero?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Si así es, ¿cómo decidieron casarse/vivir en unión de hecho y cuándo?</li> <li>- Si no está casada o vive en unión de hecho, ¿piensa hacerlo en el futuro con esta pareja o con otro compañero?</li> </ul> <p><b>Relaciones con el padre de su hijo/a:</b> <i>(En el caso que el papá del hijo/a no sea el compañero actual):</i> <b>Cuénteme un poquito sobre el papá de su hijo/a</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Cómo y cuándo lo conoció?</li> <li>- ¿Qué edad tenían ustedes en ese entonces? (Hombre y mujer).</li> <li>- ¿Qué hacía en ese entonces el papa de su hijo/a?</li> <li>- ¿Cuánto tiempo duró su relación?</li> </ul> <p><b>¿Cómo se desarrolló la relación?</b> <i>(Antes/ durante el embarazo / en el momento actual)</i></p> <p><b>¿Había tenido relaciones sexuales antes de tenerlas con el papá de su hijo/a?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Cómo comenzó la relación sexual con él? (Explorar aquí con delicadeza si el hombre tomó la iniciativa o decidieron juntos).</li> <li>- ¿Alguna vez utilizó anticonceptivos, cuáles?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo los obtuvo?</li> <li>- ¿Fue fácil o difícil obtenerlos?</li> <li>- ¿Quién se encargó de conseguirlos?</li> </ul> <p><i>Si la respuesta es negativa, ¿Por qué no lo usó?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you like the most about him and what do you like the least?</li> <li>- And your partner: what did he like most about you and what did he like the least?</li> <li>- And how or why did you end the relationship?</li> </ul> <p><b>Are you married / or live in a union with your partner?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If so, how did you decide to marry / live in union and when?</li> <li>- If you are not married or living in a union, do you plan to do so in the future with this partner or with another partner?</li> </ul> <p><b>Relations with your child's father:</b> <i>(In the event that the father of the child is not the current partner):</i> <b>Tell me a little about your child's father</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How and when did you meet him?</li> <li>- How old were you back then? (Man and woman).</li> <li>- What did your child's father do then?</li> <li>- How long did your relationship last?</li> </ul> <p><b>How did the relationship develop?</b> <i>(Before / during pregnancy / at the current time)</i></p> <p><b>Have you had sex before you had sex with your child's father?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How did the sexual relationship with him begin? (Explore here with delicacy if the man took the initiative or if they decided jointly).</li> <li>- Have you ever used contraceptives, which ones?</li> <li>- How did you get them?</li> <li>- Was it easy or difficult to obtain them?</li> <li>- Who was responsible for getting them?</li> </ul> <p><i>If the answer is no, Why did not you use them?</i></p> <p><b>Let's continue talking a bit about sexuality.</b> As I mentioned at the beginning</p>
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**Sigamos hablando un poco sobre**

**sexualidad.** Como ya mencioné al inicio de la entrevista si hay alguna pregunta que la incomode me lo hace saber para, simplemente, pasar a la siguiente.

**Las personas aprendemos sobre la sexualidad de diferentes fuentes.**

**Cuénteme cómo aprendió sobre sexualidad.**

- ¿Con qué personas habló usted por primera vez sobre sexo?
- ¿Y en su familia – se habló sobre eso? ¿Con sus amigas se habla sobre eso? ¿Como?
- ¿Usted buscó más información?
- Si buscó información adicional, ¿en dónde la buscó?
- ¿Hay algunos aspectos sobre sexualidad acerca de los cuáles piensa que podría y debería conocer más?
- ¿Es fácil o difícil para usted conseguir esta información?
- ¿Usted considera que los varones adolescentes conocen más sobre sexualidad que las mujeres adolescentes?

**¿Recuerda usted cómo quedó embarazada de su primer hijo/a?**

- ¿Cómo era la relación con el padre de su hijo/a en ese momento?
- ¿Pensó en la posibilidad de quedar embarazada?
- ¿Habló con su compañero sobre la posibilidad de quedar embarazada? ¿Qué dijo él?
- Si usted tenía sexo con protección (anticonceptivos), ¿Alguna vez lo tuvo sin protección? ¿Con que frecuencia, en qué circunstancias y por qué?
- ¿En qué momento ocurrió tu embarazo y como te sentiste?

*Si planificó salir embarazada:*

- ¿Cuáles fueron sus razones/motivaciones para quedar embarazada?

of the interview, if there is any question that bothers you, let me know so that we can simply move on to the next one.

**People learn about sexuality from different sources. Tell me how you learned about sexuality.**

- With whom did you talk about sex for the first time?
- And in your family - did you talk about that? With your friends, did you talk about that? How?
- Did you look for more information?
- If you looked for additional information, where did you look for it?
- Are there some aspects of sexuality that you think you could and should know more about?
- Is it easy or difficult for you to get this information?
- Do you think that adolescent boys know more about sexuality than adolescent women?

**Do you remember how you got pregnant with your first child?**

- How was the relationship with your son's father at that time?
- Did you think about the possibility of getting pregnant?
- Did you talk to your partner about the possibility of getting pregnant? What did he say?
- If you had sex with protection (contraceptives), did you ever have it without protection? How often, under what circumstances and why?
- At what time did your pregnancy occur and how did you feel?

*If she planned to get pregnant:*

- What were your reasons / motivations for getting pregnant?
- Did your partner participate in this decision? How?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Su compañero/pareja participó en esta decisión? ¿Como?</li> </ul> <p><b>Ahora cuénteme, ¿que pasó cuando se dio cuenta que estaba embarazada?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Cómo se dio cuenta?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo se sintió?</li> <li>- ¿Recuerda con quién habló del tema por primera vez? (familiares, amigos/as, compañero/pareja).</li> <li>- ¿Cuándo le comunicó la noticia al papá de su hijo/a y cómo reaccionó él?</li> <li>- ¿Cuáles fueron las principales dificultades que enfrentó durante su embarazo?</li> <li>- ¿Quién le brindó el mayor apoyo durante su embarazo?</li> </ul> <p><b>¿Cómo ha sido para usted la experiencia de convertirse en madre?</b></p> <p>Describe los cambios en su vida (<i>Preguntar por los "beneficios y los costos"</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Qué es lo que más le ha gustado?</li> <li>- ¿Qué es lo que menos le ha gustado?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo te sentís ahora que sós mamá?</li> <li>- ¿Quien le ha apoyado más? Cuales fueran las reacciones de su comunidad? Familia? Amigos? Y esperaba usted estas reacciones?</li> </ul> <p><b>¿Qué significa para ti ser madre?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Qué responsabilidades tiene una madre? Como debería ser una mama?</li> </ul> <p><b>¿Qué significa para ti ser padre?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Qué responsabilidades tiene un padre? Como debería ser un papa?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo se relaciona el padre de su hijo/a con él?</li> <li>- ¿El padre de su hijo/a la apoya financieramente?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo te gustaría que sea el papá de tu hijo/a con él o ella?</li> </ul> <p><b>Cuénteme sobre sus expectativas con relación al futuro de su hijo/a.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Qué desea para su hijo/a?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Now tell me, what happened when you realized you were pregnant?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How did you notice?</li> <li>- How did you feel?</li> <li>- Remember who you spoke with about it for the first time? (family, friends, partner / partner).</li> <li>- When did you communicate the news to your child's dad and how did he react?</li> <li>- What were the main difficulties you faced during your pregnancy?</li> <li>- Who gave you the most support during your pregnancy?</li> </ul> <p><b>How has the experience of becoming a mother been for you?</b></p> <p>Describe the changes in your life (<i>Ask about "benefits and costs"</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What did you like the most?</li> <li>- What did you like the least?</li> <li>- How do you feel now that you're a mom?</li> <li>- Who supported you the most? What were the reactions of your community? Family? Friends? And were you expecting these reactions?</li> </ul> <p><b>What does it mean for you to be a mother?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What responsibilities does a mother have? How should a mom be?</li> </ul> <p><b>What does it mean for you to be a father?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What responsibilities does a father have? How should a father be?</li> <li>- How does your child's father relate to him?</li> <li>- Does your child's father support you financially?</li> <li>- How would you like your child's father to be with him or her?</li> </ul> <p><b>Tell me about your expectations regarding your child's future.</b></p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Tiene alguna idea de cómo logrará usted que se cumpla(n) ese (esos) deseos?</li> </ul> <p><b>Conoce usted a personas cercanas que se quedaron embarazadas o papas antes de los 19 años de edad?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Son amigos/personas cercanas?</li> <li>- ¿Desde lo que usted sabe – por qué y cómo crees que se embarazaron? Fue plano de ellas?</li> <li>- ¿Desde su perspectiva – cual ha sido su experiencia? Fue similar o diferente a la suya? En qué sentido?</li> </ul> <p><b>¿Basada en la experiencia que usted vivió, ¿tiene alguna recomendación(es) para las mujeres (en especial para las adolescentes entre 15 y 19 años de edad)?</b>  <i>(nota para entrevistadora/ s: recomendaciones para adolescentes en general – sin especificar si embarazadas o no)</i></p> <p><b>Conclusiones</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Cómo se sintió durante esta entrevista?</li> <li>- ¿Hay algún comentario adicional que quiera compartir conmigo?</li> </ul> <p>¡Muchas gracias por compartir sus ideas y experiencias conmigo!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you want for your child?</li> <li>- Do you have any idea how you will achieve that (those) wishes?</li> </ul> <p><b>Do you know people close to you who became pregnant or parents before age 19?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are they friends/ people you are close to?</li> <li>- From what you know - why and how do you think they got pregnant? Was it their plan?</li> <li>- From your perspective - what has been your experience? Was it similar or different from yours? In what sense?</li> </ul> <p><b>Based on the experience you had, do you have any recommendation(s) for women (especially for teenagers between 15 and 19 years of age)?</b> <i>(note for interviewer / s: recommendations for adolescents in general - without specifying whether pregnant or not)</i></p> <p><b>Conclusions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How did you feel during this interview?</li> <li>- Are there any additional comments you want to share with me?</li> </ul> <p>Thank you very much for sharing your ideas and experiences with me!</p>
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